

THE FINE ARTS ANNUAL OF PURDUE CALUMET

# Skylark

XIX Issue  
1990 Edition



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This 19th edition of SKYLARK is the culmination of the efforts, support and dedication of many people. Together, they enable this magazine to continue its tradition of promoting literary excellence.

My very devoted staff read several hundred submissions before making difficult decisions on final selection. Many hours were then spent editing, proofreading, and designing pages. The cooperation of this harmonious team is what makes this issue possible.

Professor Charles Tinkham was always available for guidance and expert advice. His wisdom and enthusiasm help us visualize and attain our goals for SKYLARK.

Special thanks go to Crystal Redden, Chairman of the Hammond School City Historical Committee, for help and access to Porter School information, and for permission to reproduce the 1912 drawings by children of Washington School.

The support of the Purdue Calumet community, as well as that of local business sponsors, is greatly appreciated. Their encouragement and contributions ensure the continued success of SKYLARK.

Robert Cooke and Dale Fleming graciously allowed me to interview them and generously shared their creative vision. They, and everyone else who shared with us their poetry, prose, and graphics, gave us gifts of beauty and inspiration. I thank each one and pass along their gifts in these pages.

Marcia Jaron  
Editor-in-Chief

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FROM THE CHANCELLOR



It is my pleasure to congratulate the SKYLARK staff upon the completion of this edition of one of the finest collegiate publications of its kind. The enthusiasm and devotion of those who worked to produce the 19th consecutive annual issue of SKYLARK are inspiring to all of us in the Purdue Calumet community. The success of those same contributors in competitive writing events is impressive and speaks highly of the quality we have come to expect in the SKYLARK.

A tribute to the faculty advisor, Professor Charles Tinkham, is certainly appropriate. He exemplifies the finest traditions of the teacher and scholar-mentor to the staff and contributors to this publication.

James Yackel  
Chancellor



## AN ARTIST'S PERSPECTIVE

### DALE FLEMING



*Illustration by Jeannine Johnson*

"Art is a visual language," states Dale Fleming. "In art there is a recording of feelings. Like a writer, an artist has something to say, although what is said in a painting may be interpreted in different ways by those who see it." And, to this perceptive artist, the theme of the painting must be meaningful, with a true understanding of the subject.

Dale says he's had a driving force to paint since the age of seven when he was growing up in Merrillville, Indiana. To fulfill his dream, he attended the American Academy of Art in Chicago, and soon he began teaching classes at the Gary and Michigan City Artists' Leagues, as well as from his home in the Miller beach section of Gary.

Many of his paintings and pen and ink sketches reflect the magnificent dunes area where he lives, and the flowers and wildlife he encounters while hiking in the dunes. Delicate drawings unfold the lupine and the prickly pear cactus, which bloom in the dunes each spring. Raccoon, fox, deer and other animals are lovingly captured by the sensitive brush of this gentle artist.

Dale feels that it is important, when he is commissioned to do a work, to be well aware of the intended purpose of the painting, because "art is not absolute: it has a point of view." An angle, size or shading in a painting can present a positive or negative bias. He gives as an example the smokestacks of industry, which may loom threateningly

or stand peacefully, according to the artist's opinion. Dale, who feels the artist must be responsible for honesty, says he must believe in what he paints, and that conviction has sometimes resulted in his refusal to paint certain subjects.

There is a correlation between painting and writing, Dale Fleming states, because the creative process is the same, regardless of the art form. "An artist must be a craftsman," he explains, "just as a writer must be a wordsmith." And, like writers, artists sometimes experience blocks to creativity. When that happens, he often goes to another medium, or becomes interested in the process itself—the application of paint, for example—as poets often concentrate on the structure of words.



Dale, who says he usually works from midnight to dawn, thinks it's important for an artist to keep his skill honed by painting or drawing every day. He carries a sketchbook with him most of the time, so that fleeting ideas may be captured, even if the actual execution is reserved for another day. He often paints to music—anything from rock to blues to classical. Rock music offers the appropriate rhythm for certain types of art, whereas classical is good for "quieter moods such as water or birds."

One room of Dale Fleming's home is devoted entirely to a fascinating small gauge model railroad—the Denver, South Park & Pacific—with a painted landscape so vivid that a visitor feels magically transported to the Colorado mountains. This western railroad is illustrated by Fleming in *The South Park Sketchbook*. Among the many other books he has illustrated are *History and Tales of a Pioneer*, by John S. Blue, and *Dunes Mammals* and *John Bailly, Dunes Settler*, both by Martha Miller.



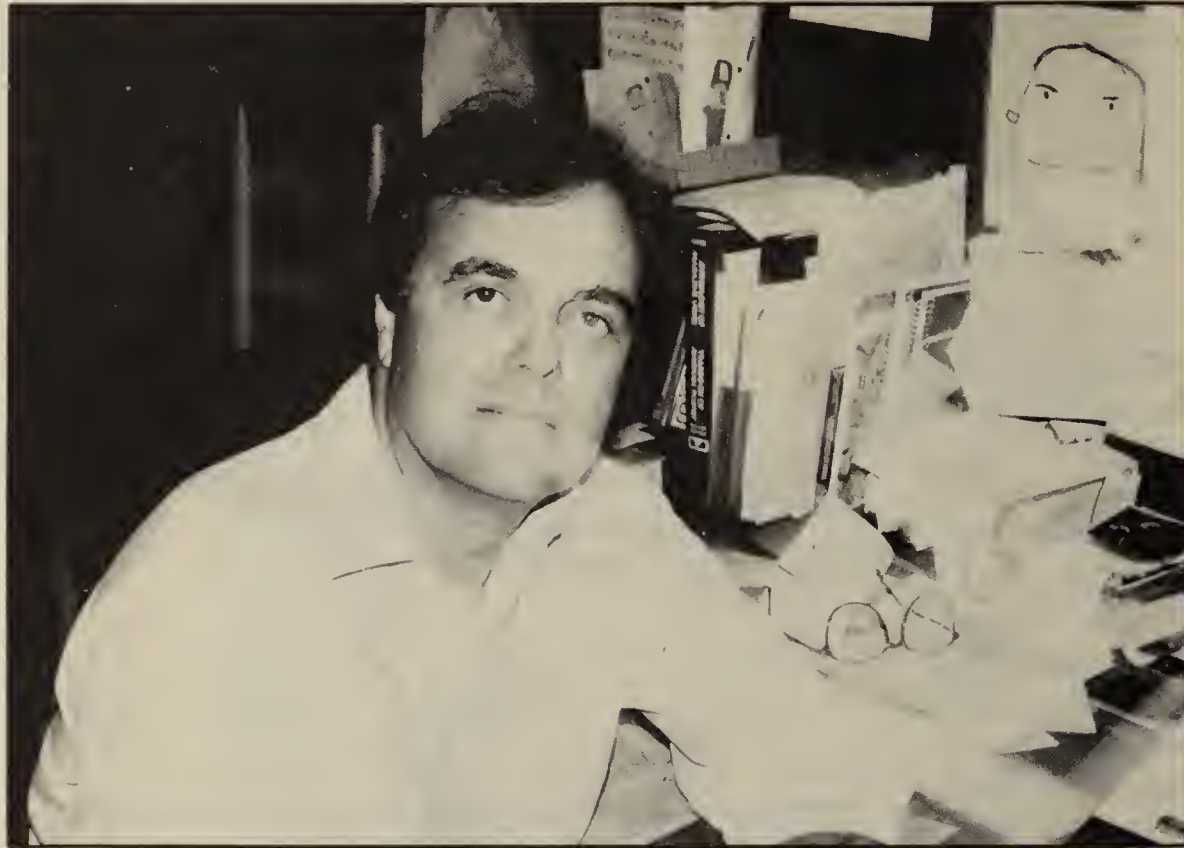
Dale Fleming designed the cover for this issue of SKYLARK, and his artwork appears on many of these pages. His South Shore note cards, depicting the local commuter line, are popular with area residents, and his work graces

many calendars and magazines. The artist has won awards at various shows, including Southern Shores, Nappanee, and Tri Kappa in Hammond. Currently, Dale Fleming is at work on a book about Northwest Indiana.





## ROBERT P. COOKE, POET OF THE CALUMET



When asked what inspires him to write poetry, Robert P. Cooke replies, half facetiously, "Industrial dread." A congenial man with a quick sense of humor, Cooke is employed by a local refinery. After working hours, when he finds time to write, he often describes what it's like to work with inanimate objects. Many of his poems reflect a "personality and metal" theme. Although some may feel that nature and industry harmoniously coexist in Northwest Indiana, often it seems to Cooke that nature suffers. He says he is "always astonished and exhilarated" when he encounters a flower or some other living thing that survives—even appears to flourish—in the shadow of a coke plant or catalyst cracker.

Cooke, who was born in Hammond, graduated from Indiana University and obtained his Master's in Fine Arts from the University of Oregon. He served with the Peace Corps and then taught creative writing at Western Illinois University before returning to the Calumet Region. Although he also writes prose, he says that one of the reasons he concentrates his efforts on poetry is that it is less time consuming.

Inspiration often comes from reading works of poets such as Dylan Thomas, Theodore Roethke and Robert Bly. Cooke emphasizes the importance not only of reading a lot, but of writing often, and says he writes each day.

In his poetry, Cooke "expresses metaphorically what people live with daily" in Northwest Indiana, where steel mills and refineries, the economic lifeblood of the area, share the shoreline of Lake Michigan with the splendid natural phenomena of beaches and sand dunes. Cooke feels residents must be able to appreciate whatever expanse of nature still survives in this region; otherwise, he says an industrial culture like ours can lead to a paycheck mentality—and quiet desperation. He believes that "nature inspires a love of nature" and that the quality of life in the area would be in danger of becoming narrower if there were no beauty to offset the grayness of the industrial climate.

Cooke, who once owned a cabin in the north woods, where he composed several works, says he tries to convey to readers a sense of temporality, the transitoriness of life. One can listen to the sounds of the woods, the lapping of

water eroding the banks of a river, he states, and be reminded of the urgency of life—the need to prevent it from slipping from one's grasp.

Quoting e. e. cummings, Cooke says, "'Feeling is first,' and from that you model your poems." He adds that geography, whether physical or spiritual, affects the poem, according to how the poet perceives the subject—be it family, environment or industry. On the other hand, he admits that the geography or figures in any of his poems are not always taken literally from personal experience; however, the feelings below the mechanics of the poem are always his. "Poets," Cooke explains, "have a genius for embellishing the facts. No one is interested in the plain truth."

Robert Cooke has received numerous awards for his poetry. His work has been included in *Southern Poetry Review*, *The 1987-88 Anthology of Magazine Verse* and *Yearbook of American Poetry*, and other publications. Recently one of his poems was nominated for the prestigious Pushcart Prize.

Cooke lives in Highland, Indiana, with his wife and three children.



## Calumet Region Blues

Awake, I'm back to smokestacks.  
Mottled sea gulls  
walk the discharge breakwalls like goons.  
They scavenge the half-dead,  
polluted, slag-fish  
as leftovers of evolved life  
floating goggle-eyed  
in a garbage dump  
of bad water.

At home, the window open,  
the whispering maple  
is drowned out  
by the important commerce of expressway semis,  
grinding fast into high gear,  
exhausting fistfuls of diesel smoke  
into the industrial-city morning.

A million cars  
amass in traffic jams,  
and stall at stoplights,  
idling toward anxious work.  
Sleep is best.

In sleep I'm a lighter being—  
going nowhere, earning nothing.

—Robert P. Cooke

## Tank-Field Life

Geese  
cross above coke dust  
and blast furnace stacks  
in the spring benzene sky.

The tank-field pipes  
are asphalt splattered  
from spills.  
Loose, clean-up sand  
gobs on my feet,  
while working to break flange bolts  
on the blackened, disabled pump.

In the flatter, broader spaces,  
a tumble weed,  
from beyond the dike wall,  
rolls by, sped by wind,

and catches  
between the sweeping curve  
of the holding tank  
and the tangent 10 inch  
discharge pipe

and wedges there,  
on into winter,  
no longer living by wind,  
the asphalt gobs  
frozen to its stuck sides  
like soft, black ice.

—Robert P. Cooke



### Twilight Stars

Mercury blazes  
as low as a white butterfly  
on the horizon in the western twilight.  
Later: up late, past midnight, tired-sleepless.  
Through the motel window,  
I overlook a street of empty  
and dark cars parked at the side  
of a small Wisconsin river  
coursing with spring ice  
swirling randomly in violent eddies  
under a city bridge,  
black as road cinders.

Up and down, up and down  
from the bed.  
Worry of my children—  
who'll love them if I die too soon.  
Worry of my old mother  
sleeping fitfully, alone  
after Dad's recent unexpected  
death and burial  
in dry, parched autumn,  
the cemetery grass blades  
as brittle as sewing needles.  
Then moonrise brings a waning,  
pale crescent  
into the chilly, dawn sky.

The stars change,  
if only their positions—  
best when low and bright  
on the old horizon,  
with white fluttering,  
rising wings  
beating a way home.

—Robert P. Cooke

### After the Summer, in Late Autumn

Our lives are brief enough.  
My small children are fast growing.  
Even the silvery spring leaves disappear  
too soon and in late fall  
the trees are cold and bare,  
stiff as death.  
Old friends  
know what I like.  
At tables I talk for hours—  
my life, your life.

In autumn I wonder  
why my marigolds  
are a darker color  
closer to death.  
Cupping their soft heads,  
I stoop to breathe in  
the last earthy smell  
of burnt-orange petals.

I walk out  
between gold mums  
and expiring hollyhocks.  
Late butterflies fly up  
striking the last icy, blue light.  
There's little left  
these last days.  
The few remaining ginkgo leaves  
fall golden,  
blotches of an old color,  
into the tired grass.

—Robert P. Cooke



# Poetry & Prose



Dale Fleming

Illustration by Dale Fleming



**NO TIDE**  
by  
Anthony Schneider



*Illustration by Dale Fleming*

As if it belonged to no one and had come from nowhere, the boat just appeared one day. There were no people on it, no tides to have delivered it. There were never any tides, just lazy ripples like fingers slowly tickling under velvet. Maybe it came from below.

It lay between beach and sky, like the barnacle-covered rock islands, an easy swim on the way to the horizon, waiting. Among the amorphous island blobs it looked neat and clean on the water, with needle-like mast pricking the skin of blue sky.

I thought about the boat, for no apparent reason, sitting in the deserted bar. I had watched the last of the bleary customers leave, middle-aged men followed by a straggling procession of plump prostitutes. I had helped the Australian bartender clean glasses and lock up and listened to the whine of his motorcycle as it disappeared in the murky nighttime hush, thick with the sound of insect and ocean.

Now I was waiting for Dave, who had left after our last set to pick up some beer and opium. We weren't supposed to stay much after closing, but most nights we drank a beer or two in the bar—our own beer since they padlocked the refrigerators. Besides, it was cheaper to buy it yourself. Why waste money on beer? We sometimes played for a while then, without the tinny drum machine they made us use for the sets. That's when Dave would play his own songs—to an audience of battered chairs and tables—humming the melodies in his scratchy voice, playing sparse, bent blues, squeezing the strings of his Stratocaster until they wept. I followed along. Boring bass.

I met Dave inland, long before that night. On the island a couple of months is long. It was in one of those anonymous places in an alley crowded with cheap restaurants and touristy bars. He was standing against the wall, resting his beer on the end of his guitar case, looking out the window.

"You in the band?" I asked.

"Nah, I just like to carry my guitar around sometimes," Dave said, "play it on the beach."

"They any good?"

"Suck."

About a week later we landed a job

at the Black Rose. We earned enough for food, beer, occasional scuba diving and a room near the beach.

Things hadn't changed much since then.

He had been gone half an hour, and I was getting tired of waiting for him. It was no fun playing bass alone, the notes sounded lonely without another instrument. Besides, I was looking forward to a bowl of opium. We usually bought it at the Lilla Bay Hotel from Philip, a porter with a thriving business on the side. He only sold to locals though, never to tourists. So it was an honor to buy drugs from him. Sometimes we would ride along the sprawling banks of the river to the Gypsy village with its tumbledown, tendril-covered shacks and dusty people picking poppies and begging for change. There we would sit around a long clay pipe with the wizened old man, who sat in his hut all day smoking as a kind of tourist attraction. I loved the taste of opium, like perfume as it crawled down your throat and into your soul.

I walked around the bar. Under one of the peeling laminated plastic tables, I found a camera, the cheap kind with a built-in flash that they sell in hotel lobbies. I picked it up and put it with the rest of my things behind the amplifiers, then walked back to the table near the stage where we sat after the place had closed. I looked out the window, through the reflection of the bar's shelves covered with dusty bottles, paper flowers, and foreign bills. The road outside had an unused stillness about it, interrupted only by the passing of an unseen car or the whine of a distant motorbike. Stepping behind the bar, I picked up the book of mixed drinks and thumbed through it, reading Margarita and Martini before I put it down.

I decided to go scuba diving the next day if I had enough money. I wondered if I did. The instructor at one of the dive shops gave me a discount on equipment rental and took me out when he had a group, which was most days. He was a gritty Australian with a mean bulldog face, but he was surprisingly mild. Another ex-con in paradise. Diving was magical in the cool, endless

water, like being on another planet, just you and the fish and the sound of your own breathing. Dave never went diving, although he went sailing a lot and spent most of his time on the beach. We both did—our lives revolved around it.

I thought about my little brother and the pool in our condominium complex back home. Once, when Joey was young, he jumped in with all his clothes on, for no reason at all, just ran out of the car and jumped in. Mom phoned Dad to come home and spank him, but Dad wouldn't. The Island was a long way from that, from Joey and McDonald's, from strip-malls and touch football in the park on Saturdays. Back home I never would have met someone like Dave, a guitarist living in limbo, with his crazy eyes, glazed, detached, but burning with some kind of ambition. I wondered what Joey would think of Dave—probably not much since he didn't like anyone who didn't play football or baseball. It was the age.

Just then I heard the metal click of a key in the lock, and Dave walked in, the door sucking closed behind him on hydraulic hinges. He dropped a paper bag on the bar.

"Did you get any stuff?"

"No," Dave said, pulling out a couple of beers and handing me one. "Philip wasn't there. Someone said he went home for his sister's wedding."

I wondered where Philip lived; I had never thought of him as having a home or a sister.

"Cheers," I said. The beer was wet and good.

"Hey, some guy spoke to me today about playing a couple of nights in a bar in town, says he owns a place. Great money."

"Yeah, I heard. So are we going to be famous now?"

"I wouldn't count on it." We drank. "Let's play something," he said, carrying his chair over to the little stage.

I followed. "What key?"

"Let's try E."

The amplifiers popped alive, crunching into the bar's tranquil hush.

I played simple blues, sliding up the E string and gently plucking the notes. Dave strummed around the bass line, irregular but rhythmical, filling the



room with reverb-laden blues. When he played lead it was soft and twangy, high up on the neck of the guitar.

There was a soft roll of thunder like a shutter closing, and it started to rain, a patter barely discernible from the white wash of the amplifiers.

We played one long song and then stopped for another beer, still sitting on the stage, guitars at our feet. Outside disparate rains seemed to be falling at once, a gentle tapping on the muddy road, a measured dripping on the drain pipes and an angry ricochet off the roof above us. Shadows of raindrops trickled down the wall beside the window.

"I love the rain," I said. It was something to listen to, something to watch, better than silence and nothing.

"Not even the rainy season yet."

I wondered how long Dave had been on the island, how many rainy seasons he'd seen. I knew he had come here with his girlfriend, because of his grandmother, as he told it. She had been in an old age home, and no one had ever visited her except Dave.

"Old people remember things a lot," he always said. "You should hear the stories they tell. I can't help thinking what's going to be there for me, when memory drops her bombs?"

His grandmother died one day, without warning, and Dave and his girlfriend took off for the most exotic place they could imagine. His girlfriend went home after a couple of weeks. Dave never left.

"I want to live a life worthy of getting old," he told me once, "'cause it's gonna happen, nothing you can do."

I was just taking some time to live, to feel like I existed. I had been dormant at college, never really awake. I needed a change to wake me up, so I decided to go to a psychologist or a travel agent—same thing really. Ask Freud. I picked the travel agent because it was closer to my dorm, and they picked the Island. It felt good to say fuck it to college and take off. Anyway, I could always go back: danger with a safety net.

When we finished the beers I got up and pulled out the last two. "By the time we finish these the rain'll have stopped." We looked out the window at the water streaming down tire-worn gullies in the road.

"Whole island's gonna wash away one day," Dave said. "Cars, trees, temples, garbage, everything."

"Really, when?"

"About three thousand years. We can finish our beers."

We drank in silence, listening to the throbbing hum of the amplifiers and the patient rain.

"Hey, check out what I found," I said, taking out the camera.

"Pretty cool."

"Yeah, I thought I'd take some pictures." I pulled the label off my beer bottle and rolled it into a cigarette. "Maybe I'll send some home."

After a while he said, "You miss it, don't you?" More a statement than a question.

"What?"

"Home. You going back?"

"Sure, sometime. I never really think about it." Not true, but it was hard to explain that I didn't know and couldn't decide. "You?"

"Don't know. You've got to admit we don't have it bad here. I mean we have a job we like that pays decently."

"Sure."

"And the beach and a place to live."

"Yeah. And music to play."

"Exactly," he nodded. "Ostensibly everything is going well."

"What do you mean ostensibly?" You could take part in a conversation with Dave but not really know what it was about.

"Well," he said, "it's starting to feel a bit like a routine."

"I guess. I'm not bored though. You should go scuba diving. I'm getting pretty into it."

The rain didn't stop so we locked the doors and walked into the sodden, purple night and climbed on our motorbikes. The tires churned angrily in the wet roads and sprayed clumps of mud behind us as we fought along under an arc of telephone poles and branches.

Back at our bungalows I pulled off my wet t-shirt, towed off and gazed around my damp room that smelled of salt and mosquito repellent and looked as if it would fall in on itself any day. I lay on the thin mattress and listened to my Walkman: Bob Dylan, an odd choice for my tropical existence, but it was all I ever wanted to listen to.

After a couple of songs, I stood up and looked in the mirror. I mussed my hair to see if I could look more like a rock 'n roller and less like a college student. It didn't work. I picked up the camera and listened to the high, faraway voice of the flash and then took three pictures of my room, enjoying the hollow click the shutter made.

Outside it had stopped raining. I grabbed a handful of coins, pulled on a dry t-shirt and walked to the pay phone in the middle of the bungalows, next to the Coke machine.

It took forever to dial the number but eventually the phone clicked and started ringing, the long ring and then silence, the American ring.

"Hello," came my mother's voice.

"Hi mom, it's me."

"Andrew. Is everything okay?" For an instant the sound of her voice was reassuring, and then I wondered why I'd called.

"Yes, fine."

"You doing okay?" She was not convinced.

"I'm fine, really." I searched for a logical reason to be phoning. "I just called to wish Dad a happy birthday."

"Honey, his birthday was two weeks ago."

"I know."

"You shouldn't have sent a card at least."

I lifted the receiver from my ear and stared at it, as if it were to blame for what she was saying. "I know. I'm sorry." I wished Dad had answered. "Is he there?"

"No, he took Joey to football practice."

The phone beeped, and I fed it more coins.

"Oh. Well, wish him happy birthday for me and tell him I bought him a present." I hadn't but I would. "I'll bring it home with me, the mail's too unreliable." That was a patent lie, and I wondered why I'd said it.

"When are you coming back?" Parents never question lies, only the truth.

"I don't know."

"What are you doing there?"

"I'm playing bass in a band. It's really great."

"But why Andrew?"



Not this again. I had hoped our argument at the airport would be the last. She needed a better reason than any I had given, and she was suspicious that there was one, which there wasn't. What did she want me to say, that I'd murdered someone and was a fugitive from justice? Dad had been more sympathetic—that is, he hadn't really said anything. He did say he'd miss me though. I didn't answer her, just listened to the static on the line, like waves breaking.

"Why Andrew?" Her voice rode in on the waves. "Can you give me one good reason to leave college like that, all of a sudden? You know how that will look on your transcript?"

"How will it look?" I asked in a falsely sweet, fuck-you tone I knew she would recognize, even long distance.

"Bad. So tell me why."

"I told you, I need some time off."

"From what?"

I didn't answer.

"Hmph" she grunted.

"Mom, I'm all out of change. I gotta go, I'll write soon."

"Take care, honey, and phone again. I know your father would like to speak to you."

"Okay, bye."

I looked at the receiver. Her voice was still inside it, tinny and small saying "goodbye" when I hung up.

On the way back I stopped in front of Dave's window. It was dark inside. I knew he wouldn't be sleeping yet, which left two options: either he was out doing God knows what or he was in there screwing. He seemed to have a fairly constant supply of women, mostly locals—not whores though—and sometimes American tourists. He was kind of famous among the locals, the 'guitar man,' taller than any of them with his chiseled features and mop of sun-bleached hair. He spoke a bit of the language, maybe that's why the women liked him. Anyway, he did pretty well. Not me. There had only been the one Buddhist British girl on her way to New Zealand to become a farmer.

I went back to my room and lay on the bed with my Walkman, still damp, still Dylan.

About four songs later, there was a padded tapping on the door. It was

Dave. You never knew when he would just show up like that.

"Come on in."

"Listen, I've been thinking. I just walked down to the beach, and that boat's still there."

"So?"

"So, let's take it."

At first I thought he was kidding, but he meant it. I could tell because he didn't smile when he said it and his eyes widened and looked outside as if he were searching for a destination.

"You mean like steal it?" I asked.

"It's exactly what we need, a gift, waiting to take us somewhere, to go. Now or never."

"Why?"

"What d'you mean 'why'? To go somewhere else, make a new start."

"Shit, I dunno. Maybe." The idea was appealing or he was persuasive, I'm not sure which.

"C'mon. Might not be there tomorrow."

"I guess."

"Let's do it. We swim out there, if it's okay, we sail around to the other side of the island and tomorrow night we come back for our stuff and some food and water. And then we go. Koh Bharu, Kota Mui, anywhere."

"I've never even heard of them."

"How cool is that?"

"Yeah, but can you find them?"

"Easy, I've sailed there before. Come on." He stood up and opened the door, and I followed him out, locking it behind me. We walked along the wet dirt road to the beach. The sand was gray and strewn with shadows under the dim glimmer of orange light that was the sky.

We looked around. No one. Just us and the ocean stretching into the horizon. We took off our shoes and kicked the sand, which flew and fell in silence. Waves broke on the shore, spreading slowly, leaving soft crescents of foam on the dark beach.

The water was colder than I expected, and I shivered as it seeped under my skin and into my veins. We shook our numbing legs and waded until the water licked our waists, and then we dived in and started swimming. When I stopped to look, I was between the shore and the boat, not really near either one, lost in the expanse of water. I put my head down and swam on. You

couldn't see anything beneath the surface, just darkness forever. I wished for a moon to make it lighter, warmer.

We heaved ourselves aboard and sat there panting as cold beads of water dripped slowly down our bodies. The Mercury engine looked brand new, the hull and rigging were intact and the sails ready to unfurl and pull us into the future. Dave was right, it was ready. We looked at each other across the helm, breathing hard. Our laughter spread across the water and then vanished.

Our eyes scanned the boat, moving from the neat sails and mast to the nylon seats to the rudder.

There was an energy in his eyes, an excitement. He was already there. Not me. "I'm not going," I said, "we can't just do this."

He looked at the water, at the neon strip where sky meets sea, and shook his head.

"What do you mean? We're doing it."

"Yeah, I know but I can't. What can I say? This is not something I do. I wish it was."

"Why? I thought you were into the idea."

"I was," I said. "I am. But I can't just follow you on this one. If I do something like this, I've got to know why, and I gotta do it alone."

"And now?"

"I don't know. I'm going home."

As soon as I said it, I turned and fell into the water's icy embrace. I swam as hard as I could towards the dim shoreline, my lungs tight with cold, my legs almost completely numb. I was tired and wanted to get into bed, to feel a warm blanket around me and close my eyes, but I had to keep swimming. When I looked back Dave was still sitting there, his silhouette sharp against the moonless sky.

*Anthony Schneider resides in New York City, New York.*

for Sarah

your voice  
curved and was blue  
and climbed

it broke into puddles  
of April rain—  
it balanced  
for precarious moments  
on back-yard fences

it explored midnight  
and the high pines  
of morning—  
it told how mist  
for moments  
can alter the world  
to dream  
and how some die  
in lonely bars,  
on lonely roads

it grew and rose  
to the silences  
of suffering—  
it described  
the golden dust  
of sparrows

it dwelled  
in the shadows  
of live oak  
and soared  
silver and blue  
through grief

—Charles B. Tinkham  
Hammond, Indiana

*Stanza 3: Bessie Smith died on a road in  
Tennessee because the "white" ambulance was  
not available; after her arrest on fabricated  
drug charges, Billie Holliday spent her final  
days drinking.*

Body Language

It doesn't really much matter now  
What I say to you, nor what you reply.  
We have learned to toss back and forth  
Little bubbles of chitchat  
Casually as cocktail party strangers,  
Revealing not the slightest sign  
That what we might have said once  
Had we found the careless courage  
Could have changed our world completely.  
That seemed an enormous plus,  
And failing again and again  
To put into words, bare words  
That could never be unsaid or revoked  
What both so achingly felt  
Required every ounce of our willpower.  
Even yet, in odd empty moments,  
I wonder quietly whether that silence  
Was victory or defeat. We both know  
That had only the two of us stood on the brink  
Of that maelstrom speech would have stirred,  
Almost certainly we would have plunged.  
It was only the trusting faces of those others,  
Standing so starkly unknowing  
Beyond the mists of the moment  
That sealed our lips, held us a heartbeat apart  
Until death do us join forever,  
So help us, and let us speak.

—Ray Mizer  
Greencastle, Indiana



### Topping Off

The dreaded moment comes, then,  
when the squared-off image  
blinking like a highway flare  
in shadow  
plunges you in gloom,  
a darkness next to absolute;  
the feeling is like falling  
down a bottomless well, and you  
sense futility—  
and so you sigh, pluck  
like a bearded penitent  
at threads in cracks  
and crevices,  
and wait—  
for a novel maven  
or a sudden savior  
or, at the least,  
the pleasures of a deep,  
reflected sleep. Comes, then,  
the time and touch of day,  
and light falls like cutting blades  
around closed doors,  
and only the ticking pulse  
remains to remind you of  
the squared-off hour. . . .

—Dan Pettee  
*Portage, Michigan*

### He Said Ease Was Just Picking Up, Hearing My Voice

crocus slithering  
up to the morning  
frost planted in  
the fall an act  
of faith in a  
grey November  
sleet in the air  
Winter she turned  
from him he said  
pulled deeper into  
herself the floor  
was icy it was  
dark when he got  
up dark when he  
got home any color  
now even the blue  
of small petals  
a miracle

—lyn lifshin  
*Niskayuna, New York*

### Love Letters

There is no rhyme nor reason why what comes  
from beings so complex as you and me;  
nor my love for you so simple  
or direct I hope may not be mistaken  
for deceit falling from my eyes like a snake  
shedding skin over varying seasons

And cycles among the desert's tumbling weeds:  
it happened and it happens still. Change  
is in everything, there is no stopping;  
no rearrangement necessary except one foot  
forward, then the next:  
we are once more where we started again.

—Dean Baker  
*Toronto, Ontario, Canada*

## STRUGGLING ARTIST DELIVERS BORGIA CODEX

by  
Jon Oppenhuis

It is going on one o'clock in the morning and a light still shines in a small concrete-block house in a nameless colonia on the outskirts of Cuernavaca.

A city billed as "the haven of the eternal spring," Cuernavaca has a reputation for drawing wealthy foreigners and high-class Mexicans into its walled colonial mansions with flowering gardens. The year-round 75-degree temperatures make Cuernavaca, a one-hour ride from Mexico City, the "California of Mexico."

The climate also advantageously breeds cockroaches. Inside the block house, a dark-complected man with a greying beard squashes a thumb-size roach on the wall and undistractedly returns full attention to his work. Richard Guthrie, an American painter, must deliver an "ancient" manuscript to a client later in the morning.

Parchment manuscripts, or codices, were used by ancient civilizations in areas of Mexico where Guthrie has lived. The parchment codices, which can be classified as the forerunner of the modern book, were made of an animal skin called vellum. Rectangular patches of vellum were strung together in lengths exceeding 20 meters and folded accordion-style into the book-like codices.

The intricate, hand-painted hieroglyphics and pictograms covering both sides of the codices express a mystic beauty that has fascinated Guthrie. He found that there were repetitive motifs appearing in contemporary Indian handiwork that could only have been conceived, he concluded, by a highly original and artistic mind. Research led him to the discovery that these particular motifs could be traced to the Pre-Columbian codices which had been created in Mexico centuries ago.

"I'm one of the so-called starving artists here in Mexico, but I don't have any desire to go back and live in the

States," Guthrie says. In 1976, a friend persuaded him to take a break from his lucrative but high-pressure contracting business. They met in Puerto Arista in Chiapas. Guthrie, with \$1000 in his pocket, intended to stay one month or until his money ran out. With a grin as wide as his native Texas, Guthrie explains, "At the end of the month, the pressure was gone and I still had \$700. I ended up staying thirteen years."

He spent the first year traveling around Mexico and another seven months living with an Indian family in the state of Oaxaca. The primitive conditions in Oaxaca were a challenge, Guthrie admits, but the experience was more enlightening than his four years of college. "I had worked hard in the U.S. as a carpenter. I thought I knew what hard work was but the Indians were unbelievably hard workers. After a few months working in the fields, I eventually was able to keep up with the 81-year-old grandfather but never with the younger men."

In the third month, he developed a severe case of amoebic dysentery and, after becoming delirious and nearly dying, was nursed back to health by an herb-wise curandera with a special blend of Indian tea. "I saw them laugh, I saw them in a rage, I saw tears run down their eyes. There was nothing hypocritical about those people. Their lives were too hard to be hypocritical. We once went a month on one meal a day of beans and tortillas. At night, I kept a baseball near my bed to throw at the rats. In that part of the country, there are large vegetarian rats called latcuaces. If we killed one, my family would cook it up and eat it."

During the Vietnam era, Guthrie had dropped out of college three courses shy of graduation. "The war had come to an end and I had no interest in becoming a teacher," Guthrie explains. Ironically, one of the missing courses was Spanish, a language he now speaks fluently.

His whole life he had been drawing and painting but never seriously or professionally. He grew up watching his mother, who supported the family as a commercial artist, paint the traditional landscapes and portraits. She never tutored him, he says, and he never received a formal art education. He did take several mechanical drawing courses in college that, he feels, helped him as a carpenter and contribute to his present artwork.

He entered the professional world of art in 1979 when the world-famous Museum of Anthropology in Mexico City hired him to paint Pre-Columbian figures which they retailed in their bookstore. The hand-painted figures, reproduced from the ancient codices, sold briskly in the museum and Guthrie estimates he completed about 1000 commercial pieces during his two-year stint. The pay was low, Guthrie contends, and he became bored "painting the same 10 or 12 figures in an assembly-line fashion." He left the museum in 1983 but continued researching the codices. He also continued to make a small living independently selling his reproductions in the state of Puebla.

The term "Pre-Columbian" is sometimes used interchangeably with the term "Pre-Conquest" to refer in a generic way to the era which existed in MesoAmerica prior to the arrival of Europeans. There are only thirteen Pre-Columbian codices known to have survived the destruction of the Spaniards. When the Spaniards arrived on the continent searching for gold and attempting to convert the indigenous population to Catholicism, hundreds of books were piled up and burned. The Spaniards felt justified in burning "idolatrous" and "primitive" representations of Indian deities but, as anthropologists know today, many of the paintings had a more profound historical and scientific basis.



For instance, the Pre-Columbian cultures had a complex calendar which presupposed a highly developed understanding of mathematics and astronomy. Their advances in architecture and pharmaceuticals were similarly remarkable for that era. "We need to look at our MesoAmerican heritage, not simply because in two years we'll be celebrating the 500th anniversary of the arrival of Columbus, but because it's stupid for us as Americans not to be

be Mixtec and three Mayan. The Mixtec codices, critically admired as being more colorful and beautiful than the Mayan, had until this century been believed to be Aztec in origin. In fact, until Alfonso Caso made his revelatory archeological find at Monte Alban near Oaxaca in 1927, the Mixtecs were an unknown civilization.

The Mixtecs, who were located from southeastern Puebla to western Oaxaca, were warriors like the Aztecs.

In any case, A.B. Rodgers, who works as an oilfield technician in Saudi Arabia and has provided financial support for Guthrie's project, obtained bootleg photographs in Italy of all 76 plates of the original Borgia Codex. The Borgia Codex, a Mixtec codice now stored in the Vatican library in Rome, officially surfaced when Cardinal Stephano Borgia retrieved it from the children of the Benustanni family. The children had begun to set it on fire when Borgia discovered the ancient manuscript and, as a result, Guthrie says, two plates are missing from the front and back of the codex. How the Borgia Codex surfaced in Rome in the Benustanni household remains a mystery.

Rodgers, a lifelong friend of Guthrie's, was aware of his interest in Pre-Columbian art and gave him a complete set of photos of the Borgia Codex. Guthrie was pleased with the gift and began a series of drawings over the course of nine months reproducing the Borgia. The problem Guthrie encountered was that the Borgia Codex is, like all ancient manuscripts, incomplete as a result of handling over the years, especially around the edges. "I saw the Borgia as a big jigsaw puzzle with missing pieces. And the answers, I felt, were in the manuscript and could be found," he said.

He began the project of extrapolating a restoration of the Borgia Codex in 1983. For three and a half years he followed a grueling and disciplined regimen of researching and painting. Fourteen hours a day and seven days a week he worked on the Borgia. In 1986, he devoted three months to opening a business in Puebla where he was living. The business, a slot-car track and hamburger joint, initially blossomed and soon ran itself. Later, it failed and Guthrie managed to recoup some of his investment. He resumed work on the Borgia for another year and a half.

The Mixtec codices are thought to have been produced on deerskin. Many of the approximately 500 codices produced at the time of the Spanish Conquest used a paper made from the indigenous amatl tree. Guthrie, looking for authenticity, travels to the small village of San Pablito, Puebla, to buy the handmade amatl paper that he uses for his reproductions.



*Photo by Jon Oppenhuus*

concerned with the largest ancient culture in Western civilization," Guthrie emphasizes.

Contrary to popular belief, the Aztecs are not responsible for developing the high level of Pre-Columbian civilization. They did bring their own God, Huitzilopochtli, to the Valley of Mexico along with a messianic belief in the triumph of their own culture. In barbaric, war-like fashion, the Aztecs overtook other pre-existing civilizations and inherited Olmec, Toltec, Zapotec, and Mixtec culture along the way. Until Friar Bernardino de Sahagun started compiling his pre-Hispanic history of MesoAmerica, a project lasting over 40 years, the Spaniards believed that the sophisticated Aztec civilization was truly and originally an Aztec accomplishment.

Of the thirteen surviving pre-Hispanic codices, ten are considered to

"But the intelligence discovered in their codices is so great," Guthrie claims, "that there has never been another book that has taken so much cerebral energy." The fact remains that no one has been able to translate the Mixtec language which, in its time, was only known among the priests.

Caso was in the process of compiling a dictionary of their language when he died. Before his death, he speculated that even if research was able to decipher the priests' ritual language found in the codices, it was likely that another distinct and more common language predominated among other Mixtecs. In the 1950's, with Wasson's discovery of the ritualistic use of hallucinogens among Indians in Oaxaca, an interesting theory was developed that raised the possibility that the ritual Mixtec language may have originated among the priests under the influence of hallucinogenic drugs.



As is customary in small villages across Mexico where an entire puebla concentrates its efforts on one product (e.g. blankets, guitars, copperware, etc.), the artisans of San Pablito specialize solely in handmade amatl paper. When Guthrie first arrived in San Pablito, he found that the villagers did not make the 4' x 8' sheets he required. Furthermore, they told him they did not have the capability of making the larger sheets. After consideration, Guthrie demonstrated how it was possible to use larger boards to make larger sheets, and the puebla has continued the process since that time.

Once he obtains the paper, he first draws the design in pencil and then smears a light coating of titanium dioxide over it to make the paper less porous. He paints with professional quality Grumbacher water colors mixed into eight colors and applied from light to dark. The black lines "encase" the figures and are applied last. When dry, the paintings are mounted and framed by an artisan in Mexico City.

Finally, in 1988 after five years of using these methods, Guthrie completed the entire set of 76 plates which, like the original Borgia, measures 22

meters long by 27 centimeters wide. His restoration was professionally photographed at a cost of \$4,000 and the photos were bound into a copyrighted book entitled *Codex Diaz-Rodgers: An Extrapolated Restoration of Codex Borgia*. The original set of paintings were placed in a bank vault in Dallas. Oddly, after all of his work, the self-effacing Guthrie had the book copyrighted in the name of his wife and his friend. He explains the decision by saying he "couldn't stand to go to New York to do promotion work in case that becomes necessary."

The book has been submitted to three publishing houses in the United States. On December 15, Dover Press contacted Guthrie and said they want to publish his work. They had spent six months supposedly having the authenticity of his extrapolations surveyed by anthropological experts. Guthrie is not worried.

From a critical perspective, his one-of-a-kind extrapolation of the Borgia Codex and the extensive research that went into it, are the most significant aspects of the project. He based his work on over 1000 pages of notes that he is presently organizing into an

accompanying commentary. An expert at the Museum of Anthropology in Puebla who viewed his work was so impressed that he immediately asked Guthrie to donate it to the museum. The museum felt the work to be of monumental importance and was willing to publish it if Guthrie surrendered his rights.

Guthrie, however, is looking for more prestige. He wants to reap some financial rewards for his large investment of time and money—and he is in no hurry. If Dover does not finalize a contract soon, Guthrie will look elsewhere. At heart, Guthrie is an artist—accustomed to a frugal and simple lifestyle. He will paint. He will wait.

On weekends, he can be found in front of the Cuanahuac Museum on the zocalo in Cuernavaca displaying his original reproductions from the Borgia Codex. Depending on size and complexity, the paintings range in price from \$8 to \$120. Stop by and discuss ancient MesoAmerican culture with Guthrie. And purchase one of his paintings while you are at it. They are certain to be collectors' items and, besides, Guthrie still cannot afford to eat very well.

*Jon Oppenhuis resides in Lowell, Indiana.*

Patches of bright sun  
cannot mask the damp chill as  
winter waits to kill.

—Frank P. Galiani  
*Baltimore, Maryland*

#### Autumn Haiku

Squirrel's trigger twitch,  
cocking on the fallen leaves,  
startles mourning mind.

—Michael Downey  
*South Bend, Indiana*





*Photo by James L. Madison*

### **Cabin Fever**

There is no sight  
like a house  
afire,  
consumed  
in phlegmatic  
blaze  
in the midst  
of winter.  
Whimpering tongues  
lazily lick  
the soles  
of slumbering  
floors,  
and whisper  
dreary daydreams  
to the  
shivering  
rafters.  
No energy is left  
to produce  
flight  
or laughter,  
to blow off steam  
or heat  
high beams  
in temperamental  
thaw.  
When Spring  
detonates  
the living flame,  
wood can shift  
and sweat  
again,  
lifting its sooty  
chin  
out of the ashen  
experience  
of this temporary  
gloom.

—Mary Rudbeck Stanko  
*London, Ontario, Canada*

### Parent/Child

He grew old when I wasn't looking;  
Sandy hair turned wispy white,  
Square shoulders acquiesced to time.  
The cane is new since spring:  
"Goddamn gout!" he growls,  
Like a zooed bear.

I miss our long, ardent walks,  
Replete with philosophy—  
Mostly his impaled on me:  
"What kind of girl wants to be an engineer?"  
"And why the hell do boys wear earrings?"  
"Saving the whooping crane—now that's an  
expensive bunch of crap!"

Instead I find him huddled in his chair,  
Remote controlled to the Chicago Cubs.  
"Who's pitching?" I ask, just to ask.  
"Well, they started with Maddux, or  
was it Sutcliffe, and now . . .  
Oh, hell, I guess I fell asleep!"  
"It doesn't matter," I say.

We're off to the movies, like old times,  
Except I drive, maneuvering his monster Buick  
While he bickers with road crews and traffic lights.  
The handicap place in front,  
Forbidden seductress of the able,  
Is a joyless prize this day.

In the dark we sit so close  
His shoulder touches mine.  
"Shit!" he spits,  
As popcorn skitters to the floor,  
"No matter," I say,  
But I feel his sigh.

I remember the once strong shoulder;  
I'd bury my head against it  
When the screen turned frightful.  
"Tell me when I can look, Dad," I'd say,  
Not knowing that when I looked away  
I would miss so much that matters.

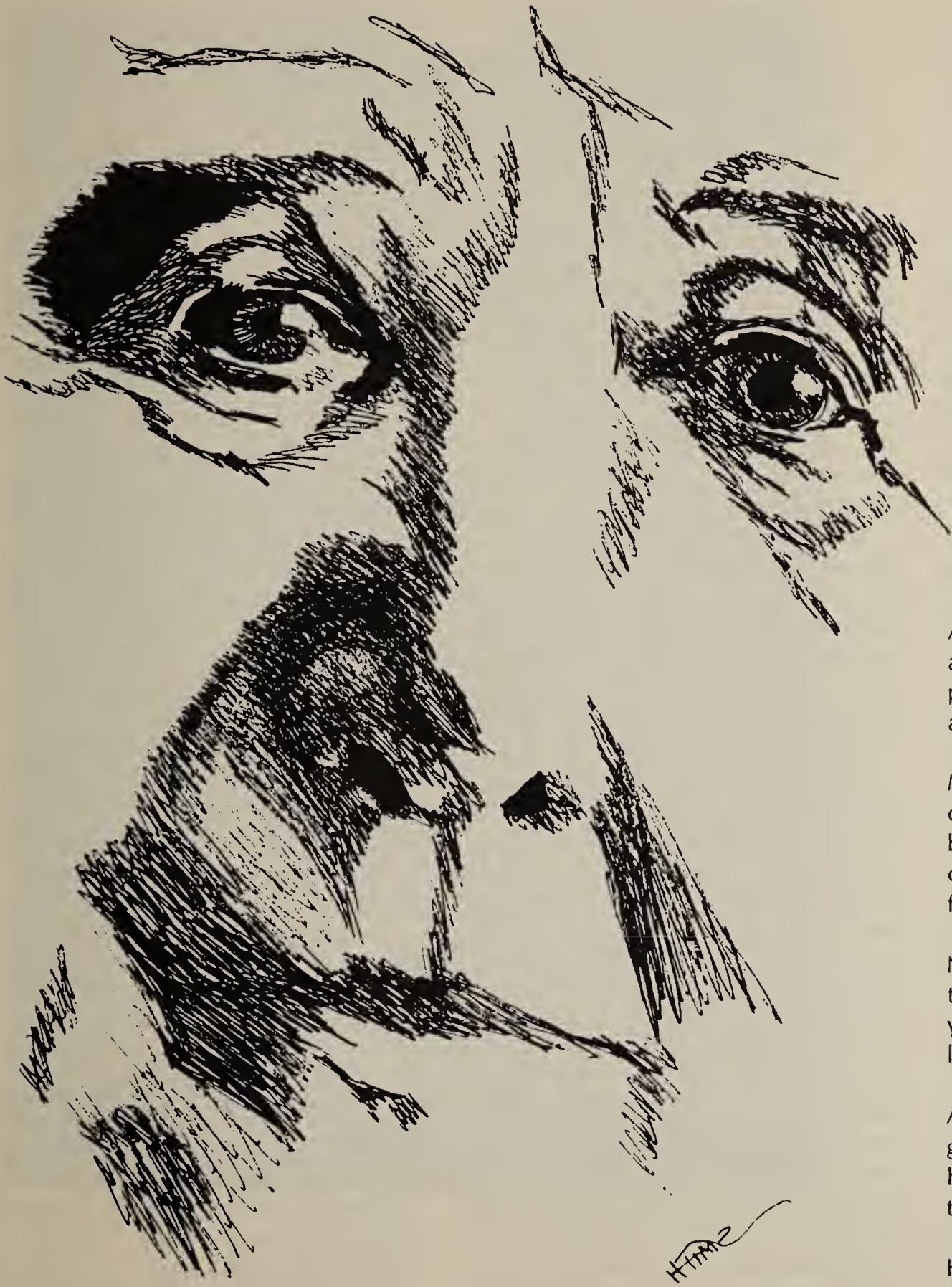
—Sally Nalbor  
*Crown Point, Indiana*

### Retirement

This isn't how they told me  
it would be—  
days stretched end to end  
with no beginnings,  
vast, empty hours with no purpose;  
I fill my coffee cup  
for the tenth time this morning  
but cannot fill the time so easily.  
I stroll between the rows of marigolds  
while phantom feet still stride  
toward steel-gray lines of desks  
to punch a clock.  
I miss my busy cubbyhole,  
the billings and the orders and the phones,  
the smiles at breaktime;  
but, most of all, I miss the me  
who had someplace to go each day.  
Here  
I creep along these hallways  
like a memory  
and life goes on somewhere  
while I  
wash the dishes, make the bed,  
dust the rooms I dusted yesterday.

—Marcia Jaron  
*Highland, Indiana*





*Illustration by Louise M. Smith*

### **Aging**

An old man  
alone in his kitchen,  
peers out the window  
at children playing.

Memories of youthful days  
cloud his eyes with tears—  
baseball games,  
close friends,  
feelings of being invincible.

Now, a wrinkled face  
tells his life's experiences—  
years of strenuous work,  
little time for frivolity.

Arthritic hands,  
gnarled and stiff,  
haven't the strength  
to open a jar.

His feet shuffle slowly,  
no longer willing to dance.  
He strains hard  
to hear the music.

His heart  
no longer beats strongly,  
but relies instead  
on a pacer.

The spirit of this man  
is broken with age.  
He waits and prays  
for his spirit to fly free.

—Susan Dubczak  
*Schererville, Indiana*



## IT RAINS ON THE JUST

by  
O.A. Fraser

(to J.W. Drew)

To see the two old men foolishly scuffling in the rain, one would not believe that they had once been the best of friends. A crowd was forming, and a few of the younger spectators were laughing, but no one was making an attempt to separate the two aged combatants.

"Go gramps, go!" someone exhorted.

"What they fighting for?" someone else asked.

And one would never had guessed, unless he knew the life stories of both proud men. From all appearances it was raining too hard for either of the combatants to be safely outdoors without some serious concern for their health. But here they were, battling in a downpour, amid the derisive laughter of the crowd.

Here, then, is the reason.

Joe was an old black man, getting older and going nowhere much, except for church, which he did daily. Most of his time was spent writing poems and a "history of my demise," as he put it. He was sixty-seven and had not worked in five years. He had lost his wife, and in the three years it had taken her to die from Alzheimer's, most of the money he had saved up for his retirement.

Joe's chief characteristic was steadiness. He had held on to Cleotha, a woman prone to anger and illness, through thirty-five years of marriage. During his last fifteen years of employment, he had held on in Northwestern University's Department of Pathology under Dr. Cutling as an environmental technician—a mordant euphemism for the thankless task of removing the cadavers of cats, dogs, and countless rodents from the myriad cages where death met them, to the animal morgue when science was through probing, injecting, and otherwise inquiring.

The last six months, however, had been marked by a pervasive anxiety about life. Gina Mae was the likely

cause of that. She had packed her children, her husband, and the contents of her apartment into a U-Haul truck and headed to Texas.

"For my sanity's sake, daddy," she had said. "Everything about Chicago reminds me of mother. I can't go on like this forever."

And so his only child had fled from the city where he had found sanctuary forty years earlier. She had fled to Houston; he had fled from Chattanooga. Her leaving had induced the same terrible soul-ache he had felt when Cleotha was buried. For the first time in his life, he felt both alone and afraid.

These events impelled Joe to Antioch Baptist Church on the fateful Monday that led up to the fight he was now having. He was seeking work, having wearied of the eternal cycle of breakfast and lunch programs which the church provided—although he had actively participated in both. This Monday was special because Antioch Baptist had hosted several seminars for senior citizens who were interested in returning to the labor force. Joe was excited because he had completed the program, and because his minister had arranged for him to have an interview with a local merchant in the early afternoon.

"I been hearing a lot about how old man Beam tries to hire senior citizens, so I think I stand a pretty good chance," he'd confided in Ellie Jamieson. Now he was fighting. The wet crowd was growing larger and louder. The rain stung, and it was a while before Joe realized that tiny hailstones were pelting him. Inwardly he felt glad for the downpour. At least Hank, his adversary, wouldn't know that he was crying, that he felt old and foolish, that he was tired, and that he wanted nothing more than to stop and go home.

"They jazzy! They jazzy! Ain't they?"

"Hey, it's all the way live," someone replied.

The voices seemed amplified, somehow too loud. Joe had grown accustomed to a quiet world, but now the entire universe was booming again.

Through moist eyes, he squinted at Hank Stroger. Joe had met him thirty years earlier, shortly after moving into Chatham. Both had been active men, working together in the Block Club and helping to turn out the vote in their precincts, although both had skidded along a different path to poverty in recent years.

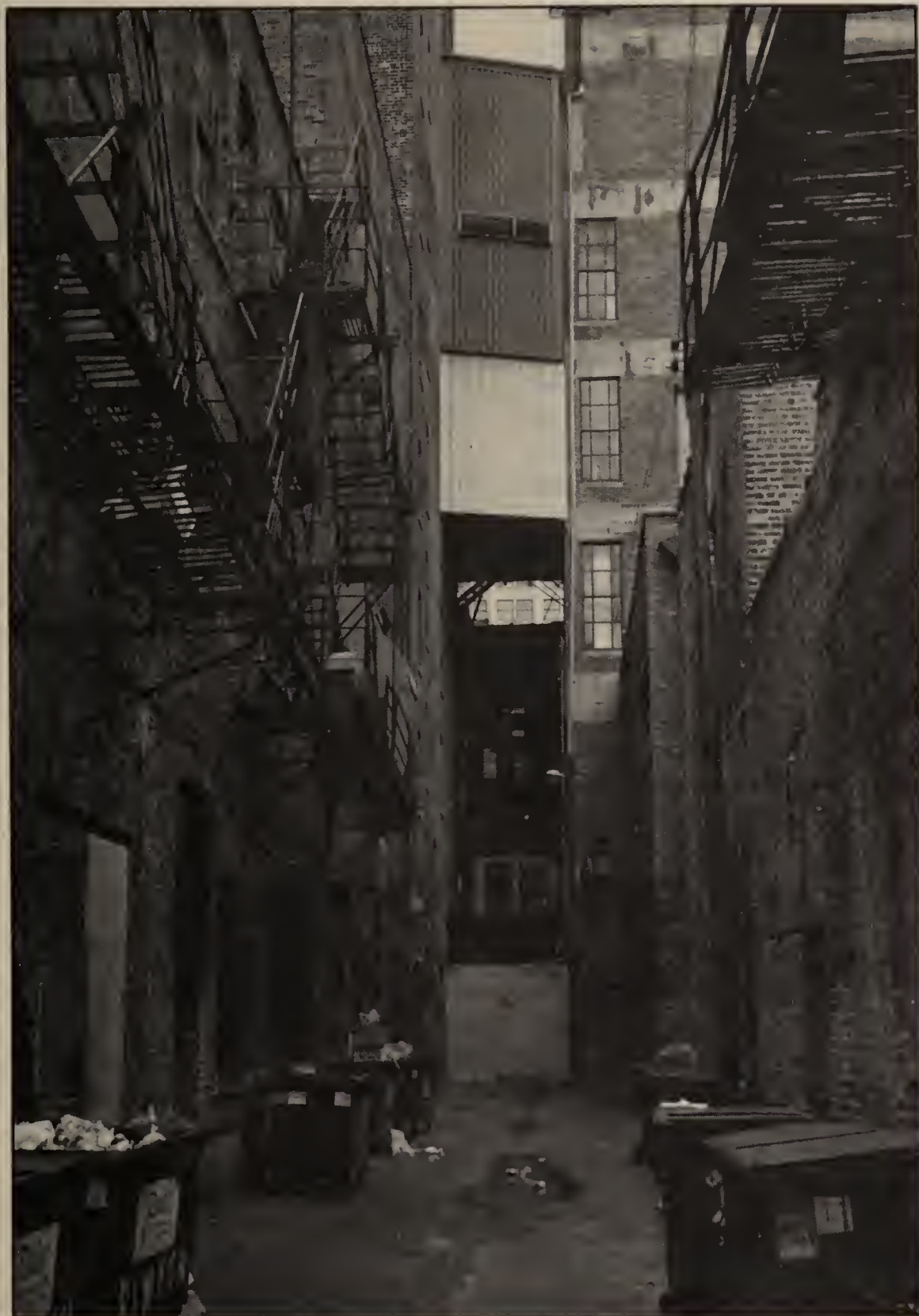
It was agonizing to see how Hank had let himself go, so Joe was always careful to feign blindness when Hank was in a bad way. The morning Joe left for Beam's Department Store was one of those occasions.

Joe had noticed a clump of a person leaning against the mailbox at 71st Street and Princeton Avenue. Upon recognizing Hank, Joe had elected not to say hello.

Hank's pride, like the pride of many broken men, had grown volatile and stubborn with misery. Ever since losing his home on Princeton, he had grown mysterious, and was variously rumored to be living in a shelter, a half-way house, and on the street.

From time to time, when Hank was sober, he would straighten up. Then, one could discern the remnants of his fine features, the sinews winding around his lean frame which stretched skywards like a lamp post. One could almost inhale his haughty pride, the pride he possessed at being the first black to play on the basketball team of Loyola University. And though Hank had never graduated, like Joe he had always held good jobs, two at a time most of his life, as had been the custom among Chatham men of their generation. If you happened to walk past Hank on those rare occasions when he





*Photo by James L. Madison*

was sober, you could feel the angry pride, that hard work instills in a man, emanating from his skin.

But the combination of Bethlehem Steel streamlining their midwest operation and his wife dying seemed to have done Hank in. He was like a giant redwood felled by a ruthless lumberjack who had a passion for the sound of falling timber.

Ellie Jamieson, Joe's next door neighbor, had been the first to see Hank

going through the trash in one of the alleys. "Just a shame. Such a shame. That poor man!" And so it had gone through the neighborhood like a hesitant autumn wind rustling the fallen leaves and then resting.

Joe had boarded his bus in a stupor. He reflected on the times Hank would fly into a violent rage when word was going through the neighborhood that crazy little Lula Mae Hope had been knocked up. Hank hadn't been married

more than a year, when the girl had come up pregnant. She would wander through the neighborhood, during her psychotic episodes, telling everyone how Hank Stroger had been laying up with her in the old Roberts Motel on 63rd Street.

Well, Hank had never owned up to it, and the matter had died down. Lula Mae had birthed a little girl, one that everyone said was the spittin' image of Hank. Then, shortly after the child was christened, Lula Mae had committed suicide. But the girl had grown into womanhood and still lived across the street from Joe, right next door to Hank's old place. She had never married, but had two small children, and was rumored to be a whore.

Now, at a time when everyone else in Chatham was growing old and poor, the girl, Leila, seemed to be doing all right for herself. Mrs. Jamieson had started speculating that the girl was probably trafficking in narcotics because she didn't seem to have a man, at least one that was steady, and somehow she and her kids weren't going hungry.

"Whoring hell. If whoring could pay to keep up a house like she does, I'd be whoring my old ass to the likes of you," Ellie had said to Joe in a moment of irreverence.

And that was one of the ironies of life. "You never know," Joe had said, "what the good Lord has in store for you. If Hank had owned up to being that girl's father, maybe she'd be taking care of him right now."

But instead, Hank had become an itinerant, mysterious man. During his lucid periods, he would tell Joe about working for a store. But he never went further than that, and Joe never pressed. A man had a right to his secrets.

That morning's ride on the #71 had been very somber. Seeing Hank had reinforced Joe's fears that the world was changing too fast for most folks. He could see it in the faces of the women and the children lining 71st Street. There was a time when winos had held court on 71st, except for the occasional mad woman who would come along prophesying the return of Christ amid the street corner harlots, and the ubiquitous hawkers of stolen merchandise. Now ordinary people



appeared to be living on the sidewalks, even during the colder days of early winter.

It was mid-spring now, but no one had left. Indeed their numbers had grown, and there was an aura of permanence in the way they went about life along this shopping strip. In the past they would migrate with the shoppers: coming out full force by noon, then disappearing magically at dusk. Now, on the few occasions night-fall had caught him at church, Joe would notice that no one seemed to leave the sidewalks when darkness came. And each time he had thanked God for the lift he was receiving to the relative safety of his home.

There were fewer and fewer places a man could find safety in this world. A hard right hand from Hank caught Joe flush on the chin, opening up a cut. Joe tasted the salty rivulet of blood and his tears flowed faster. Hank seemed to be getting stronger. Joe thought about begging for mercy, also about turning and running as fast as he could from the front of Beam's Department Store, away from the job that had brought him to blows with his former confidant.

"Yo. . . old boy's starting to bleed," the voice was plaintive.

"It's like watching Tyson," this voice was tinged with awe.

Joe knew then that no one would step in to pull him and Hank apart. This crowd was comprised of frustrated men and disillusioned women. They needed a cathartic experience, the erotic release that sometimes comes with carnage and with bloodletting. They were looking forward to a sacrifice. It didn't much matter whether it was he or Hank, just so long as someone wound up in the back of an ambulance or in the county morgue. Then everyone would go home and vividly retell the spectacle they had witnessed, until the next fight.

It was a sad end to a week that had begun with tremendous promise. Joe had left Antioch Baptist Church at one o'clock Monday afternoon. He had walked one block north and one block west to the front of Beam's Department Store. He'd paused to rehearse his opening lines, then stepped from the glare of the spring sun into the relative cool and shade of the store. He had

seen the two white men behind the counter. The younger man appeared busy with a customer, so Joe had approached the older man who appeared to be in his late sixties.

"Good afternoon, sir, my name is Joseph Beam and I have been referred by Antioch Baptist Church. . ."

"Ah yes! Good, good to meet you, Joe. I know Antioch's pastor well. You here to see about work?"

"Yes, sir."

"Well, Joe, as you can see, things are kind of slow around here now. But don't be fooled. A lot of proms and weddings bring in business this time of year. Pastor Roberts tell you what kind of work we got?"

"No, sir. It doesn't really matter. I need to work, and I'd be glad for anything you can help me with."

"Joe, my name is Jack. You don't have to call me sir. Now I'll be frank with you. Me and my boy—that's him over there—we do all the work behind the counter. What I need is for someone reliable to come in for a few hours every day and more or less get the place looking clean. Now, I've been using this one fellow the past few months, but he's just got too many problems. Half the time he doesn't even show. You think you might be interested?"

"Interested? Mr. Beam if I tried to explain my circumstances to you I'd probably break into a blues song halfway through," Joe said with an earnestness that elicited a guffaw from Jack.

"Joe, you probably won't believe this, but businessmen know more about hard times than might meet the eye. Now, how soon can you start?"

"I can be here in the morning, sir."

"Well, I really need you in the afternoon."

"That's even better. I usually stay at the church for breakfast and lunch. I can start tomorrow afternoon."

"Joe, I can't tell you what a pleasure this has been. I know things will work out. How does five dollars an hour sound?"

"Mighty fine, sir. Mighty fine."

"Good Joe, good. Just remember to call me Jack."

And with that he had shaken Joe's outstretched hand, and nodded in the direction of his son. "You two'll get

introduced tomorrow," he had said.

Joe had left Beam's with a smile on his face, incredulous at how easy getting hired had proven to be. Beam's was a Chatham institution. He couldn't remember a time when the store wasn't at the corner of 71st and Cottage. Strolling away from Beam's, Joe's smile had broadened because he had found himself pretending to be the wealthy old geezer who owned the establishment, but who liked walking to and from his affairs for eccentric reasons.

A bolt of lightning now split the sky. The hail rained down from the heavens with unspeakable vengeance. Momentarily, Joe felt hypnotized, and then realized that his left eye was almost closed and that he was squinting through his right one. He felt detached from the experience of the crowd and the fight, but he was very, very cold, and he could feel his shoulders trembling.

It was then he knew that Hank was not simply trying to impress the crowd. The crowd had nothing to do with what was in Hank's heart. Hank's look was a look that Joe had seen on the faces of many of the animals he had removed from Dr. Cutling's laboratory. It was an amorphous portrait of rage and hate, the murderous expression of a heart unwilling to accept the terms of its own mortality. And then Joe realized that it wasn't just the job he had taken from Hank, it was the girl.

Joe had run into her while leaving Beam's Monday afternoon, having decided to walk the twenty blocks home. Two blocks into the walk he had felt a rush of vigor he had not felt in the five years since his retirement. It had given him a young feeling, and he had known within the marrow of his bones that he had placed his finger on the pulse of life.

"Good-looking. What you grinning about?"

Joe had been startled by the young woman's voice. Unable to ascertain whom she was addressing, he had continued on.

"So you're not going to stop and talk?"

It was then he had realized that the voice was directed at him. Turning, he had seen a young woman, no more than thirty years old. She was modestly dressed in a pin-striped baby blue



oxford shirt, a knee-length khaki skirt, loafers, and a broad-brimmed straw hat. She seemed out of place on this particular street corner, notorious as it was for women who earned their living careening out into the traffic for prospective customers.

"You still not going to say hi, huh?" she had insisted.

Then he had recognized her. "Leila, that you, girl? What you..."

"You look so nice," she'd interrupted. "Looks like you starting to get over your wife. You know, I was wondering how you were going to handle Gina Mae leaving town like she did."

"Well honey..." and the conversation had gotten off the ground. Leila didn't seem like what she was alleged to be. She seemed more like a coed or a nurse to Joe. It had made him unsure about the rumors he had heard over the years. But when they got within two corners of the block they both lived on, she told Joe he could go ahead alone if he wished. She wouldn't be offended. Then he understood.

She was indeed a prostitute, and was concerned about casting aspersions upon his reputation, he surmised.

"Honey," he said, "folks got to do what they need to do to hold on in this life. I wish I could get somebody interested in this old, broken down frame of mine. God Almighty knows I could use the money."

And with that they had both laughed. Joe studied her features. There was no denying that this was Hank's daughter, although Hank had spent a lot of time refusing to admit this fact. At first he had denied his patrimony because he was a married man in good standing in the community. Late he had denied his patrimony because of what she did for a living.

But Leila was a lovely young woman, determined, and very bright, as Joe deduced in this first talk with her. Like Joe, she shared a passion for literature, especially poetry.

"Let you in on a secret," she had said with a sly wink, "I been having a crush on you for the longest. I been writing poems about you, seems like most of my life. Promised myself a long time ago I was going to land a dignified-looking older gentleman like yourself. Don't that sound crazy?"

It did, and Joe felt he knew that she was putting him on. Still, being put on by a woman not much younger than his own daughter felt good. She was easy to talk with, and seemed to know every detail of his life, although they had never had occasion to talk in the thirty-odd years they had lived on the same street.

"I guess you've come to know me about the same way as I've come to know you," he said.

"You talking about the grapevine in general or Ellie Jamieson in particular, huh, honey?"

"Girl, you ought to quit that. I'm just flabbergasted. Just flabbergasted! To think I've watched you grow up all these years and never taken the time to get to know you."

"Well, you were too busy being married," she said with a smile. "Anyway, care to tell me what you been hearing about me?"

And when he said nothing, she continued, "Ain't nobody ever told you I went to Kennedy-King and got my LPN, I bet."

It was a warm day, and he had felt the energy emanating from her breasts, proud as pyramids, rising and falling like the swells of the lake that was calling summer forth.

"You feel like visiting, honey?" he had surprised himself. But the question had already been asked.

"Your house?!"

She seemed taken aback, and Joe felt that he had betrayed her trust. "This girl could be your own daughter," he had found himself thinking.

"Ain't no nigger from around here ever been man enough to invite me over during the daytime," she had said, recovering from her obvious shock. "Well, if you don't mind having me, you know I'm not going to say no! Just give me a chance to check on the kids, and freshen up some. Is seven o'clock a good time?"

"Honey," he had laughed, "you start pushing my age, any time's a good time." And with that they had parted company. She had headed up the brick stairs to her front door, and Joe had crossed the street to his.

True to her word, she had rung his doorbell at seven. Joe was more than a little surprised because she had

obviously taken the time to fix herself the way a woman might for a date.

"Here goes your reputation," she had said when he answered the door. "Mrs. Jamieson saw me come in here. You'll never live it down."

"Oh, that woman," he had said. "I don't pay her no mind."

"Good," she said, "I've got something for you."

"What?"

"Oh, a poem I wrote a while back. But you go ahead and finish doing whatever you were doing back there when I came in."

"Honey, I'm done. I was really more or less racking my brains thinking about how I was going to entertain you."

"Entertain me? You serious?"

"Well, I didn't do any cooking, but I've got some pop and a stash of liquor Cleotha collected over the years, if that counts as entertaining."

"Shoot, I ain't hungry. Besides, ever since Gina Mae showed me one of your poems from *The Defender*, I been dying to sit down and talk with you about writing."

There was a moment of blackness. Hank had caught Joe flush on the left ear with a powerful right cross. A younger man would have merely fallen from the force of the punch. But even as Joe was crumpling, first to his knees and then to his back, the crowd had abruptly hushed, sensing that this was not an ordinary knockout.

Two old men had been scuffling for fifteen minutes, and the aggressor had finally struck his quarry with a death-blow. There was a puddle of blood forming where the elegant old man's head had struck the pavement. His lips appeared to be moving, although his mouth was soundless.

Joe inhaled deeply, and felt himself sinking. The crowd had finally grown quiet. From where he lay, the rain had lost its vengeance. The downpour seemed like the interminable wail of the gods. Someone in heaven was crying profusely. Joe imagined he was hearing a voice speak softly to him: "This won't take long, son." It sounded like the voice of his mother.

He felt himself to be dying, and wanted to scream. But he was too old, and too tired, and too weak.

"I must be brave," he said to himself.

He turned his final thoughts to Leila.



Theirs had been one evening together, the kind of evening a man treasures for a lifetime. It had brought him to this ruin, but it had also brought him the only love he had felt in a long, long time.

They had shared poems, talked, and caressed: the three things Joe still cherished about life. And when the evening was over, she had no sooner gotten home and undressed when his phone was ringing. They had started talking at midnight, oblivious to the steady infusion of blue into the early morning sky. Only the voices on the street had made them both finally realize that morning had come again. Each had grudgingly hung up the receiver, and both had drifted to sleep

with the same preoccupations, the same heart-searching for a time when the feeling they now felt had been felt before. And both had concluded that once before they had experienced the same giddy rush of love, a long time ago as teenagers in high school.

Joe's world now was completely dark. Both of his eyes had closed, and he was motionless. One voice had replaced all the other voices in his head. It was Leila's. He could hear her reading the poem she had written for him, which she had shared with him on a warm spring night when they were rushing into love.

"This is called 'Joe Beam,' she had said. And then she had put an arm around his neck, and allowed his face

to languish on her breasts while she read:

You are no ordinary Joe:  
This, of course, you know.  
Why else would you shovel snow  
When it feels ten degrees below?

The flakes, they will fall  
Into your yard, then not at all.  
One child will make a giant  
snowball;  
Another, one that is small.

You are no ordinary Joe:  
What with your shoveling snow  
Or thinking up poems by the  
window  
And walking to and fro.

You are more like Super Joe  
With a great, big 'S' below  
Your oxford white as snow.  
I dare you say, 'tis not so.

*O.A. Fraser resides in Chicago, Illinois.*



*Illustration by Louise M. Smith*



### I Offer You My Hand

I start to offer you my hand  
And I know  
You may not extend yours.

I know it's much easier  
If  
I just keep it in my pocket  
and go my way.

I reach out to offer you my hand  
You look away  
You turn around  
Wearing a silly smile!

I know it's much easier  
To keep it in my soft pocket  
And go away  
But  
I like the risk.

I stretch out my hand  
And I think  
It might be a deep feeling  
A new beginning  
Toward a new relationship  
Perhaps a new friend,  
Or maybe a new life!

I know it's much easier  
If  
I just keep it in my pocket  
And let my thumb rub the lining  
And go away,  
But  
I think the "YOU" and "I"  
May choose to touch.

I start to offer you my hand  
My hand swings toward you  
You hesitate  
And for a terrible moment  
We stand in a foolish posture.

Suddenly . . .  
The fingers meet  
And something in me responds to you  
The beginning of joy!

I know it's much easier  
To keep my hand  
In my soft pocket,  
But  
I like the risk,  
I offer you my hand.

—Yahya R. Kamalipour  
*Griffith, Indiana.*

### Whirligig

Under bare branches  
rustling with ice,  
he jogs over  
satin streets:  
a wind-driven  
whirligig.

Up and down, his  
limbs beat out  
a Russian  
winter march.

In and out, his  
breathing stokes  
the chilling  
twilight air.

Then she comes to him  
with gold hair swinging.  
And he catches her smile—  
a pearl dropped from  
an oyster sky.

But in passing,  
her indifference  
brushes aside  
his outstretched hand.  
He halts.

When she sprints away—  
a glowing arc erased  
by gloom—he waits  
for darkness to rub  
him down.

—Pamela Hunter  
*Hammond, Indiana*

## Don't Sing to Me

Another lyric more or less  
will do, she said and sipped her drink  
as though she'd done a thousand times  
the same with someone else, her jaw  
too firm for lying and her nose  
imperfect as the Pleiades are  
when one is looking for a circle,  
line, and angle—she had all  
you'd ever want in womanhood  
and more for those who didn't know  
too much would spoil the later show.

You curled your lip and sidled up,  
her look inviting you to touch  
on other matters, such as where  
on earth is help when women need  
some solitude? Her hair was soft  
and scented, shone like burnished strands  
of metal smoothed by knowing hands:  
I'm something of a connoisseur,  
you'll say and wait for her reply,  
which doesn't come until you've turned  
less pink, more olive. She has spurned

a dozen like you as she listened  
to the rock star sing her song,  
the one she could have written twice,  
in rhyme and once without, but didn't,  
leaving tinkerers to tinker,  
tune their strings, intone the words.  
She'd rather sit alone inside  
where music's played and hear it said  
that men are loving, faithful, true  
until they're done with major thrills  
and minor virtues. Nature kills,

she murmured as she sipped again.  
You stood a little closer, felt  
aggressive as you pressed as hard  
as any man could manage there  
among the crowded lyrics, blaze  
of light from one direction. Looking  
like the Mona Lisa done  
in mauve, she moved a little back.  
You smelled her scented warmth and swayed,  
assured that here was heaven once  
you won your object. Ignorance

is not attractive, nor is pride  
in little people. She approved  
of every word the singer sang,  
"We'll do in one more time it all."  
Profundity is not required  
of every human always, you  
especially. All you want is love  
well handled for at least an hour,  
less if you have other plans.  
She sips as if the glass were male,  
you thought and thought you couldn't fail.

But then the music stopped abruptly,  
leaving you to say, I saw  
you sitting here alone and thought  
we'd make it better being two.  
Her lips were hardly painted red;  
her eyes were strangely dark and knew  
how men respond when challenged, looked  
aside and looked if not disgusted,  
less inspired than ever. Love  
is not required for some things, not  
of some. Males sweat, she thought, a lot.

—Bernard E. Morris  
*Modesto, California*





Illustration by Dale Fleming



## ABOUT ME

by  
Daniel Meltzer



Illustration by Dale Fleming

Mildred, my agent, said I should do an "About Me." My haiku aren't selling and my screenplay for the *Ben Hur* remake, with a rap theme and a motorized skateboard race around Bethesda Fountain, has been through all the right offices on both coasts and not one call.

"Me?" I said. "How can I do an 'About Me'? About what? I don't jog, fish, hunt, play squash, poker or touch football or pick-up basketball or live in a suburb. I can't lift a hammer or a whisk without injuring myself or a bystander. I have no children, no hobbies, no pets, have never gotten lost in the woods, and each of my four ex-wives has vowed not to set foot in the same building with me without an armed escort.

"Think of something uplifting," she said. I couldn't.

"Listen," she concluded, "postage is going up again and I'm finding it hard, quite frankly, to justify representing someone whose last publication was a situation-wanted in 'Soldier of Fortune' three years ago, and whose only response came from the FBI."

Each week in "About Me," a different evolving twentieth century American writer shares with readers his discovery that "yes, I have been bad, I have been self-obsessed, cruel, cheap, insensitive, materialistic, chauvinistic and so on, but I can change, if I just accept how essentially caring and open I can be, because (and here's the nub of it) no one can love you until you learn to love yourself first." A review of my own life failed to reveal a single incident which could, even given my own extraordinary gift for humility, be

exploited and hammered into the requisite contours of a revelatory, sensitive "About Me." Mildred was right. It was useless. But a few days later something happened.

I'd slept over with this gorgeous Englishwoman I picked up at the Red Parrot, whose husband was with the U.N., she said, and was always "off trouble-shooting, someplace or other." She was a knockout, as they used to say, and a Lady with a capital L. She lived in a twelve room flat on Fifth, knew the Queen, rode the Concorde the way I take the D Train, walked like a model, quoted Shakespeare and spoke in complete sentences, using words like "ubiquitous" and "splendid" and "shan't" and neat expressions like "Heavens, no," "most assuredly not" and "I should think so." She also



possessed a veritable bottomless well of unexploited passions.

When I dragged my hickey-scarred body back to my apartment late the following afternoon, after tea, I found the door ajar, pushed it open and stood face to face with a tall teenager who didn't exactly look like he was there to assess my decor for *Metropolitan Home*.

The growth on my forehead when I regained consciousness was, without exaggeration, the size of a tennis ball and felt like Ivan Lendl was still trying to volley the fluff off of it. As the mess came into focus, I could see that my TV was gone, as were my ghetto-blasters, a pair of imitation sapphire cuff links, the Kennedy half-dollar I used as a paper weight, a ten-pack of subway tokens and, of course, my typewriter. Worse yet, my intruder had taken the time to read the *Ben Hur* screenplay and left notes in the margins, comments such as "This sucks," and "Who ever told you you could rite (sic)?" He even suggested I set the film in the L.A. barrio, fashion the hero after Cesar Chavez and replace the skateboards with low-riders.

My old Louisville Slugger baseball bat, lifted from the high school athletic department, on the floor beside me when I came to, was what he had apparently hit me with. There was no point in reporting the crime. I had no insurance and most of the stolen goods I had either ripped off myself or bought hot.

I saw the world doubly obscured through a screen of throbbing pain and a distorting shard of wavy milk-glass, but what my intruder had said in his margin notes appeared to my mind's eye all too clearly. He was right, of course, about *Ben Hur*. I threw the manuscript down the incinerator chute and staggered to Riverside Park, with the bat as a cane and a towel full of ice cubes pressed to my forehead. I was not, as Hammett might have put it, a pretty sight.

Gazing from my bench through the turgid, summer air over the river, I saw replays of all my hideous sins, dating from the innocent schoolyard games of my youth; games in which I had cheated at every opportunity. The

muddy haze that hung over the Hudson was not more polluted, I knew, than my own ego-contaminated existence. Floating there before me in that murk I saw myself as the mythic, self-devouring, tail-chewing dragon Ouroboros, whose circular pursuit epitomized, as well as any symbol could, the sum total of my worth: zero. The mute bat I held in my hand spoke more honesty and purpose than anything I had ever set to paper; its emphatic, exclamation-point shape expressed more integrity and worth than any single act of my wretched, self-indulgent life. I saw my father, who wanted me to be a major leaguer; my mother, who had urged me to become a CPA. I had let them both down. I cried for the first time since I was eleven. The river beckoned, but I had read that drowning is the most pleasant of deaths, and I didn't deserve such an easy exit. Instead, as I sat there at the edge of the city, gazing out from the very border of my own wasteland, I suddenly began to feel, yes feel, in an unfamiliar hollow somewhere deep within me, the stirring of a new and desperate need to completely renovate my own character, to pull out of my lifelong headlong kamikaze dive to the deck of the Carrier Depravity, and maybe pick up some better metaphors along the way.

"Yes," I said to myself, struggling not to eavesdrop too conspicuously on the young lovers coupling in the bush behind me, "I have been selfish, wasteful, an unworthy son and a rotten husband. But there *is* such a thing as free will. I *can* change. I *must* change. I *will* change." I made a commitment to get in touch with my center. Discounting through an exercise in simple logic the possibility of my own pregnancy, I recognized, nonetheless, the agony of that moment as nothing less than the wrenching birth pains of my own emerging awareness, without anaesthetic, and without anyone holding my soiled and loathsome hand. For the first time in my life I felt whole.

I vowed then and there to share my epiphany in an "About Me" essay. It would be positive, optimistic; the breast-baring, gut-wrenching, soul-searing confession of a gutter-rat metamorphosed by his brush with oblivion;

a liberated, literate lover of beauty and truth rising from the wreckage of a rotten reprobate, a monarch butterfly flitting free from the cocoon of a world-munching gypsy moth and soaring south to bask in the healing sunlight of a stable Latin American dictatorship. And, despite this flood of encouraging new images, I would give up poems and screenwriting for investigative journalism, or social work.

I limped home, slept for fourteen hours solid and arose to the first day of the rest of my life aching, not so much from the purple protrusion in my brow, as from the insatiable craving for someone to love.

I worked on that column for two solid days without food or sleep, in longhand, naturally, breaking only for coffee and speed and the biological necessities. "A Resurrection," I modestly titled it, and sent it off to Mildred. It came back, postage due. I sent it again and waited. After a week, I called her.

"Oh, that," she said. "I did you a favor and didn't send it in. Look, I'm very busy with a couple of clients who are doing TV movies right now, maybe you'd do better to find an agent who has more time for you." It was of course a setback, but one I deserved, even welcomed, as part of the essential growth process. I pondered my next move. I needed a mission, a cause, preferably within a one-fare zone.

Lightbulb! The English Lady on Fifth. Antonia? Antoinette? Anise? So neglected, lonely, legs up to here, thirsting for love and sex and laughter, and with that view of the skyline and an effete, globe-prancing, cold-fish husband who doesn't deserve her. The Yanks have helped the Brits before. Why not? It's practically a tradition.

Yes, my princess pines for me in a treasure-crammed art deco tower across the reservoir, awakened and now so vulnerable and defenseless in a city of unscrupulous opportunists. Prepare my charger, ready my mail. Throw open your shutters, Rapunzel, unfurl your locks, drop the diplomat and turn down the sheets. I'm a New Man and there's nothing that can stop me now.

*Daniel Meltzer resides in Sharon, Connecticut.*

### Prelude to a Bridal Shower

Multicolored paper, ribbons, bows, scotch tape, and women  
All join en masse before my eyes and they blend  
Into one soft spectrum metamorphizing to a  
    hard screech  
    I look at her  
    surrounded by a gossamer gaudiness.  
She does not fold the paper meticulously  
    rather clenches it into a hard ball with  
    her tight tiny fist  
    her tremulous smile  
With each new gift and each new fist  
She rewraps her life  
Not realizing each ribbon winds itself  
    Around  
        her  
        throat and ties her to a life  
Choking her spirit.

—Erika Hartmann-Hayes  
*Chicago Heights, Illinois*

### Knowledge of Spring

This afternoon I dissolve into April.  
A bird's song, substantial as a leaf,  
delicate as a religious calling, exhales,  
touches my ear with its breath, its language  
full of bargaining. I buy  
the loud, chirping promise that the world will  
become as bright and secure as  
a shining sidewalk suddenly kind  
to the risk of bare feet. This is how  
I start spring, close to new sun, listening  
to a robin getting along from branch to branch,  
striking shadows off snow with hesitant  
wings, dazzling near flowers  
that rise in defiance of melting away.

—R. Nikolas Macioci  
*Columbus, Ohio*

### Love Was

Dew on the closed eyes  
of the timber wolf's lashes  
as it slept in the twilight  
in a cave in the woods.

A dreamer who basked in  
the soft tawny sand alone  
with the world as a companion.

The strength of the avalanche  
that fell silent on a mountain  
without identification by human  
documentation. It needed no  
written record because its  
destiny will still live  
on beyond our lives.

An endless wave that lay  
naked for the world to gaze at  
in awe of its splendor.

A bond that embraces all and  
everything.

—Cally Raduenzel  
*Highland, Indiana*



0101-919-752-7271

The most difficult telephone  
number in the world to dial. . .  
1 pound, 20 pence for 1 minute  
to spring time North Carolina.  
It's 2:00 p.m. Bells are pealing.  
I stand at Martyrs' Memorial,  
look out the red booth; think  
about the times when the Dodo  
was housed in the Ashmolean.  
I can't get through, as usual.  
Telephones make my fingers swell  
and my tongue stutter. I feel  
like I'm in THE WALL, which not  
surprisingly, is showing across  
the street. Showtime, 2:30 p.m.  
Bells are pealing but I still  
can't get through. I hang up  
just as I hear my 2-year-old  
daughter fumble, drop, then try  
to answer the phone. 59 seconds  
pass. Disconnected by British  
Telecom, I listen to the buzz.  
The bells still peal as I make  
it to the Victoria. Last call.  
There are a bunch of dogs here.  
A Jack Russell, two whippets, an  
English Bulldog and something I  
can't identify. I fit right in.  
Finishing my Bitters, I mumble  
back to my room, think seriously  
of my wife's skin, eyes, laughter  
and long legs. I get in my single  
bed; pretend to sleep till 7:00 p.m.  
All this academic business, even  
at Oxford, can be tedious, lonely.

—Hal J. Daniel III  
*Greenville, North Carolina*



*Illustration by Henry White*

#### **Sorcerer's Ad**

WANTED: APPRENTICE TO POET:  
Skilled in the weaving of spells:  
Must—A DEGREE IN ENCHANTMENT:  
Magical notions that sell.

STIPEND OF ROSES AND RAPTURE  
For master of mystical mind:  
Able to deal with deception:  
Willing to work with the blind.

—Nessi Kopitz  
*Cohoes, New York*

## THE STORYTELLER

by  
Amy Garza

High on the mountain, far away from the closest neighbor, Grandpa sat in the cabin by the fireplace whittling little birds from oak wood and telling stories. In the dim light of the kerosene lamp, his frail form cast shadows on the wall. As I sat on the floor at his feet, I listened to his every word—spellbound—not taking my eyes off him for a moment. Even today I can still hear his slow, loving voice; I can hear it with my heart.

He told of the history of our family: how three brothers had come from Ireland to settle in the Appalachians (one of whom was my great-grandfather). He told of black bears, black panthers, and black-hearted men. He told of Indian spirits who silently stalked the heavy forest, of ghostly spirits who preyed upon unsuspecting family members, and of the evils of home-brewed “spirits,” which he himself made from fermented corn.

As a child, I clung to every word, storing them away like treasured keepsakes, little knowing how profoundly these stories would affect me. Now, I realize that they molded my very life; for on the strength of this oral history, I grew up believing that my ancestors were courageous and true, honest and trustworthy, that they cared for their neighbors, were loyal to their country, and loved their God. I wanted to be like them—I *had* to be like them! Their stories gave me a sense of belonging, a sense of pride, a sense of history that

would never leave me. But, most of all, they left me with a deep love of family and of the mountains that gave birth to me.

Storytelling! Such a great art! There’s no greater entertainment than to feel the suspense of the real-life drama of your own family. Just imagine, the lights are low, the room is quiet, all eyes are centered upon one person—the storyteller. His voice, low and throaty, almost seems to echo as he speaks.

“Old Doc—you should’ve seen him. He’d been the Doc fer evers s’long in our parts, ’n he wuz old—real old. I can see him like as if it wuz yesterday! His hair wuz white ’n he had a white mustache stained with tabaccky juice. The black coat he wore jest seemed to hang from his bowed shoulders.

“But what I remember most wuz his eyes! They wuz red ’n shiny—’n seemed to glare at me from underneath his bushy white eyebrows. All I could think of then wuz that he must be close to lookin’ like the devil.

“Wal, sir, he takes his time gettin’ his black bag open. Then he lays out onto the table some long silver-lookin’ sissers...’n a knife. I remember his fingers wuz all crooked ’n drawed up together.

“Then he turns ’n looks at my leg—’n says in a real deep voice, ‘Looks like I’m gonna have to cut it off, boy!’ ”

What power! These words, along with the setting in the cabin and the individual attention he focused on me, brought people vividly alive in my mind. I could actually see Old Doc and the boy. My imagination took over.

Imagination is the power of storytelling. Imagination calls for attention. It creates larger, more colorful images than any reality. For long after the story has been told, the memory lives on.

It is so gratifying to know that the tradition and importance of oral history are once again alive in our country. There are professional and amateur storytellers abroad in our society spinning their tales in a wide variety of settings—from local performing arts societies and storytelling festivals, to a national storytelling convention.

But let’s bring all this even closer to home. Why not try telling a story yourself? Tonight, instead of reading a story to your children, why not *tell* them a story? It could be about your grandparents, your own experiences, or even about the children themselves. You have no greater gift to give to the future of your children than the stories of the past that gave shape to your family.

My ancestors are alive in my mind and heart because Grandpa told a story, and then left that responsibility of interpretation to me. Old Doc and the boy still live; for now I’ve become . . . the storyteller.

*Amy Garza resides in Griffith, Indiana.*





Illustration by Dale Fleming

getting a college education  
ca. 1962

Books were a habit strong as breath  
for us, the gifted female few,  
plucked out for learning  
(like a brand from the burning),  
by some teacher, a beloved aunt,  
or parents' friend who loved the arts and music.  
We shone in our 18-year-old splendor  
in male preserves, in love with  
the figure we cut in pants and boots.

Honor students bright,  
in English class we learned  
to peer out through the Spanish eyes  
and sallow face of Donne. Immortal  
lover, but we were not told  
that his bride, his Ann,  
his "compass's fixed foot,"  
bore twelve times in sixteen years,  
died with the last, at thirty-three.

After her pregnancies, the infant deaths,  
stillbirth, her hopes and sickness,  
Ann left no art at all.  
A blank, a name, perhaps  
a bracelet of bright hair.

Next year, in "19th-century thought,"  
Burke was a god, but Mary Wollstonecraft  
was just a footnote, her name tossed off  
by the provincial, tweedy man,  
who smelled of harsh tobacco  
and gestured with his empty pipe.  
"You might want to read her," he said  
as an aside, looking only at the women.  
"Next week we're going on to Ruskin."

—Gillian Norris-Szanto  
*St. Davids, Pennsylvania*

Campus Siren

Ah, there you sit,  
Dark, languorous eyes  
And pouty lip,  
Soft, breathy sighs,  
And sparkling wit.

In crisp business suit,  
And legs crossed just  
So,  
So dignified, so petulant, and  
Oh,  
So self-possessed.  
So distant,  
So pretty,  
So wrinkle-resistant.

So neat and clean,  
The class is simply  
Outclassed. . . and unseen.

Eclipsed by your  
Incredible presence,  
Simply paled  
By the hypnotic  
Essence  
Of your uncommon  
Personality,  
Why, your ways and means,  
Are simply  
Criminality.

—Greg Susoreny  
*Munster, Indiana*





*Photo by John Carlisle*

### **Autumn Bound**

The boy caught in a dizziness of leaves,  
Flinches as colors fall from wind-clogged eaves,  
Shouts as their shadows race across his sleeves.

Runaway brightness dances with the air.  
The child claps for the freedom unaware  
Their ride for sky has stripped the landscape bare.

Someone who speaks leaf language should explain,  
Trees have no power to take them back again,  
For beauty blinds young eyes to dark and rain.

The boy turns merrily around and round  
Heedless of helpless whispers from the ground.  
He does not know some things are autumn bound.

Tree shapes of emptiness upon the hill  
Sing him no hint of the November chill  
Because for him, time never has stood still.

—Sandra Fowler  
*West Columbia, West Virginia*

### **Autumn Malady**

Doorways, store fronts, miles of road  
and leaves go deeply bright  
with brassy loss. The world begins  
its blue exit to autumn. A turquoise day  
drapes melancholy over death's branches.  
Aquamarine air spins my heart above  
useless tress.

—R. Nikolas Macioci  
*Columbus, Ohio*



*Photo by James L. Madison*



## THE BIG LEAGUES

by  
Michael Beres

It was too soon in his life for funerals. Although the last funeral he had attended was almost five years earlier, it seemed like only weeks ago that Professor Linda Richards, his media advertising advisor, had died in a motorcycle accident. That funeral had been a closed-casket affair. This funeral would not. This funeral was his father's. No motorcycle accident to mutilate the face. No airplane crash. Just cancer. Just that bastard cancer sending his father back home where he belonged.

"Paul, I don't want you to say one word about Dad's life these last two years. Especially in front of Mom. She's got enough grief to deal with."

They were home. He and his sister Judy were home, sitting in the living room while sounds of their mother rustling up a snack came from the kitchen. They had just come from the wake where their father lay thin and wasted, his head not seeming to have enough weight to press into the casket pillow. Paul knew he would have to look at that face only once again, at the funeral tomorrow. He had missed the first night of the wake on purpose and used the difficulty-of-booking-a-flight-from-Seattle-at-the-last-minute excuse.

The reason he had used the excuse was because he knew his father's lover would most likely be there that first night. He had not wanted to see his father's lover, not that first night when tears would be heaviest and introductions would be most difficult.

*Mom, this is Dad's friend Philip. Yes, he's the one Dad was living with. But we don't have to tell that to anyone else, do we?*

Judy had two kids, a boy and a girl, two and three. She sat across the coffee table giving Paul that I'm-a-year-older-with-two-kids-and-you're-not-even-married smirk that put twin dimples in her cheeks. "Paul, did you hear me? Don't say a word about Philip to Mom."

"Why not? She met him at the wake last night."

Judy leaned forward over the coffee table. Her knees, draped in the dark blue of her skirt, pressed into the table edge. "Just don't!"

"I'm glad he wasn't there tonight."

"So am I," said Judy. "But he'll be there tomorrow."

"How do you know?"

Judy looked toward the kitchen where the tea kettle had begun whistling. "Mom asked him to be a pallbearer."

"Tell me," he said, watching the kitchen to make sure his mother was not listening. "Did you shake hands with him?"

Judy scowled at him, answered in a harsh whisper. "No, for Christ's sake, we French-kissed. Of course we shook hands."

"Was it a firm handshake?"

Instead of answering, Judy simply stared at him, her hands clasped together on her lap. At a time like this, at a critical turning point in their conversation, she would have ordinarily lit a cigarette. But at the wake tonight she told him she had quit six months ago. In the kitchen the whistle of the kettle dropped in pitch and slowly went out.

He and Judy spent what remained of the evening with their mother. They sipped tea and munched cookies and spoke of father and husband as if the two-year absence preceding his bout with cancer had not existed. Mom brought out the family album and had Judy and him sit on either side of her on the sofa. In an hour Mom summarized the twenty-five year family history.

Most photographs were of Mom and Judy and him. Dad, the family shutterbug, flitted in and out of the black pages, appearing only at critical junctures—baptisms, weddings, family reunions. The most recent photographs were of Dad back home, already thinner, already dying. The final photo-

graph was taken in the hospital. "By Dad's favorite nurse," said Mom. And she emphasized the word "favorite" by raising her eyebrows. It was a photograph of Mom sitting on the edge of Dad's bed. She had her arms around his neck. Mom and Dad were both smiling.

After the album was put aside and the cups and saucers cleared, Mom stood at the foot of the stairs and said goodnight. She hugged Judy, then him. She wept for a moment, blew her nose in her handkerchief, climbed the stairs. A minute later, as he sat with Judy on the sofa, Paul heard the rush of water in the plumbing, then the gentle creaking of Mom's bedroom floor above the living room.

"God, I could use a cigarette," said Judy, picking up the family album and flipping through it. "You were smart not following my lead. Filthy goddamn habit."

"Did you quit when you found out Dad had cancer?"

"Yes," said Judy as she continued to riffle through the album.

"Hey."

"What?"

"I'm sorry about that handshake thing. It just surprised me that Mom would ask him to be a pallbearer."

"You should be sorry. If Mom hadn't come in you probably would have gone on about how because he's gay he probably couldn't carry his load."

"I wouldn't have said that."

Judy looked up from the album, stared at him. "I know you, Paul. You don't let go once you get started. Then later when you've had time to cool off, you're so repentant."

"Okay, so I won't start again."

"I hope not," said Judy, back at the album.

She flipped pages near the beginning, into the distant past before their parents' marriage, where the black album pages were covered with faded black and whites that had been trans-



ferred from Grandma's album, black and whites of little kids who would someday grow old and die.

"Here," said Judy, pointing to a photograph at the bottom corner.

It was a photograph of two boys in baggy baseball uniforms. Paul remembered when he was a boy having admired this photograph whenever he got out the album. A photograph of his father and a friend from the old city Little League days. Both boys were about twelve years old. Their caps were off and their hair was shaggy and indented where the caps had been. A caption on the lower border, evidently written in by Grandma, said, "After the big game."

The reason Paul had been attracted to the photograph was because, when he was a boy, he always imagined having a friend like the boy with his father. Something about the way the friend held both their caps said that the friend had thought enough to have his father also remove his cap for a better photograph. Something about the way the friend clasped his father's shoulder, something about the tilt of his head and his smile—all of these things had made Paul want a friend like that, a true friend he felt he'd never had throughout his boyhood. All of this from a single photograph, a photograph Judy was now pointing to.

When he looked at her he knew. "Is this Philip?"

Judy continued staring at the photograph. "Yes, this is Philip. Mom showed it to me last night. Apparently she met Philip years earlier at a class reunion. Then she never saw him again until last night. She speaks of him as though he's simply an old friend. She never mentions the last two years. There's no sense wondering when Dad and Philip started seeing one another again, no sense wondering when it started. As far as we're concerned he's just an old friend of Dad's."

Judy's voice was becoming shaky. "No one else will have to know. And even if they do know, that's just tough shit."

Paul touched Judy's shoulder. "It's not fair."

Judy looked at him, her eyes watery. "What's not fair, Paul? The fact that Dad's dead or the fact that he was a homosexual?"

"Both."

"Equally?"

"Of course not!"

He stopped, realizing he had raised his voice. A creak came from the floor upstairs. He continued quietly. "I'd rather have him with us the way he was than this. You know that."

"No, Paul, I don't know that. I have my own feelings about Dad leaving Mom, then coming back after he got cancer." Judy began to weep. "I—I have my own feelings about sharing the loss of my father with him."

That night, for the first time in five years, he and Judy went into their separate bedrooms across the hall from the master bedroom above the living room. Paul had trouble falling asleep. He kept hearing sniffing from the hall but could not tell if it was Mom or Judy. He finally fell asleep by wrapping his pillow about his ears the way he had when he was a little boy trying to shut out the world.

It was one of those spring days, the kind of day that makes winter seem like it never happened. The air was like fall air, crisp and dry, perfect weather for heavy, dark suits and dresses. After a late-morning service in the dimly-lit funeral home, the intense sun high in the cloudless sky made eyes squint and water all the more.

Paul rode with Mom and Judy in the limo behind the hearse. Mom sat in the middle. Paul sat to her right behind the funeral director in the front passenger seat. If he leaned toward Mom, Paul could see black lacquer and chrome of the hearse ahead. The tail end of the grey casket was just visible through the rear window.

Inside his breast pocket Paul could feel the bulge of the single, white pall-bearer's glove. The pressure of the glove was soft like a woman turned toward him, like the day Jackie Hubbard, Vice President of Regional Sales, turned toward him at the last office party, the pressure of her breast so soft as she whispered the invitation to her apartment.

As Paul stared at the hearse he was aware that somewhere in line behind was Philip. Perhaps this is what made him think of Jackie Hubbard. Jackie Hubbard invading the funeral to prove

his manhood. If only Judy could read his mind. If only she could see the stored images of Jackie spread so deliciously upon her king-sized bed.

When the hearse and limo made a right turn, Paul glanced out the side window at the rest of the procession. There were only ten cars in line. He hadn't seen which car Philip had gone to but he guessed it was the Mercedes sedan taking up the rear. A lone driver was in the Mercedes—all of Mom's and Dad's die-hard friends had come in pairs, none of them seemed the Mercedes' type—therefore, it must be Philip alone at the end of the procession.

When they carried the casket out to the hearse, Philip had not been at the end. He had been at the head of the casket directly across from Paul.

"You two will be at the *head* of the casket." That's what the funeral director had said as he handed out the white gloves. Paul remembered the queer emphasis on the word "head" and what that word and his first sight of grown-up Philip had done to him. The word "head" had, during that strange moment, taken on all possible obscene meanings and made him feel like a fool.

Philip looked younger than Paul's father had looked. Instead of the upper forties, Philip could have passed for upper thirties. The snarl of hair that had been grey in the black and white photograph was actually the color of sand. Philip's eyes were blue, his skin surprisingly absent of wrinkles. He wore a trim, charcoal suit. The only hint of unconventionality in his appearance was the odd angle at which his sideburns were trimmed. He did not wear an earring in his right ear. He did not wear a strange tie or kerchief. He looked the part of a business executive.

While they waited at the tailgate of the hearse for the funeral director to dismiss them to their cars, Paul had stared at Philip and Philip had stared back. For a moment, in recognition of being stared at, Philip had tilted his head to one side and pressed his lips together in a kind of I'm-so-sorry smile. It was the same smile, the same tilt of the head, as the boy in the photograph.

The grave site was at the end of a cul-de-sac in an expanded section of the cemetery where the trees were



small. Paul did not look at Philip as he carried the casket to the grave. And after the casket was put on its mounts above the hole, he busied himself with Mom. He stood beside Mom and held her shoulders and gave her a clean handkerchief and, when the services had ended, guided her past the coffin. Along with Mom and Judy he tossed on a flower petal, or two or three because they stuck together and felt like skin.

It wasn't until they stood near the limo that Paul saw Philip again. Mom introduced them. Philip shook his hand. The handshake was firm. Then Mom broke away suddenly to hug an old neighbor she hadn't seen in years and Paul was left alone facing Philip.

"I'm sorry about your father," said Philip.

"There's not much else you can say," said Paul.

"No," said Philip, tilting his head. "There's a lot we can say. He seemed light when we carried him, almost weightless."

"Yes," said Paul, "light. He lost a lot of weight in the hospital. My mother said she made him weigh himself every day on the scale in the hall. She said she did it to keep him somewhat active. She visited him every day. She stayed with him until the very end. I suppose he was almost weightless when he died. I suppose he weighed about as much as a ten or eleven or twelve-year-old kid in Little League."

Philip had looked down and Paul realized his speech might have sounded like a juvenile outburst.

After a moment Philip looked up, smiled, said, "I remember when your father and I were boys. Our team was called the Chicks, of all things. We won a district championship our last year on the team. Your father pitched and I remember how we all carried him off

the field. For a while after that it became great sport in the neighborhood to carry someone around on our shoulders after any minor triumph. Once, they carried me around after a game of running-bases."

Philip glanced back toward the coffin, then looked at Paul again. "Imagine that, carrying me around after a lousy game of running-bases."

Paul looked toward Mom and Judy who were still ensnarled with a group of old neighbors. Then he looked back to Philip.

"Why are you telling me this?"

"I'm not sure," said Philip. "I think I'm trying to make sure your father is remembered the way he should be remembered."

"I see," said Paul, stepping closer, speaking more quietly so his mother and sister would not hear. "You're concerned that because of the last two years I won't remember him as my father. Is that it? Or is it more complicated than that? Maybe, now that he's dead, you're trying to return my memories of him the way you returned him to my mother when he got cancer."

Philip looked toward the ground. There was no tilt to his head, no I'm-so-sorry smile. He took a deep breath, then said, "Perhaps you're right. Perhaps I am trying to return your father. I know it's too late for that. I didn't plan that things should happen this way." Then he looked up and smiled again. "But I can't help remembering how we carried him around after that championship game. I can't help comparing that day to this day. You were there with your father, back on the old ball diamond. Some would have called you a glint in your father's eye. But you were more than that. Maybe a single cell or a message waiting on his DNA. It's all related. Everything and everyone

related in time. So now here we are, you and I, brought together by the death of your father."

Suddenly Judy was standing next to them. "Paul, Mom's ready to go."

When Philip held out his hand to say goodbye, Paul grasped it and squeezed harder and harder until he saw a grimace of pain begin to appear on Philip's face.

It was noon. The sun had warmed the inside of the limo. Paul opened his window and breathed in the cool air.

Because they were on a cul-de-sac, the others in the procession had had to wait in their cars while his mother and Judy chatted with old neighbors, while he slugged it out with Philip. Now, as the limo followed the hearse slowly past the other cars, he could see the touch of impatience in the faces staring through windshields. Or was it disappointment that a funeral luncheon had not been offered? Or simply desire to get out of this place of death?

As they passed one car, Paul could hear a baseball game being broadcast. The announcer said something about the home team playing five-hundred ball and the color announcer joked that the season had just begun and only two games had been played so far.

"Is that a baseball game I hear?" asked Mom in a high-pitched voice.

"Sounds like it," said Judy.

"Well," said Mom, "I can't blame them."

As they approached the end of the line, the cars opposite them started moving toward the cul-de-sac. Everyone looked anxiously out their windshields and all the cars were moving. All but the Mercedes at the tail end. Inside the Mercedes Philip stared off into the cemetery as the others left him behind.

*Michael Beres resides in Tinley Park, Illinois.*

## Freaks of Nature

They say the tides at Mont St. Michel  
run faster than a horse, but surely not  
with that beauty, the thrill of watching  
a thoroughbred pound down a stretch  
of turf it churns into a current of hooves:  
like Man O' War, red as clay,  
foam flying off his burning coat,  
as ground disappeared beneath him  
and other horses struggled, and gave up.

They come along infrequently,  
wondrous freaks of nature or God,  
the ones who make our pulses race faster  
to watch them explode and vanish,  
as we ask ourselves,  
"Was it really there in the first place?"—

Only if we watch with hushed breath  
and believing eyes that perfection  
is possible—what the rest of us  
have given up on, what comes  
effortlessly to one or two,  
skipping generations as skimmed stones  
disappear into a glory sprayed up  
by the white horses of the racing sea.

—Robert Cooperman  
*Pikesville, Maryland*

## On Reading Yaffa Eliach

Perhaps some read with bitterness of gall.  
I read with brimming eyes and wondered, WHY:  
How people could inflict such wounds that pall  
On us who feel the pain of those who died.

The ones bedeviled lived for just one cause,  
To let their record testify for them,  
Survived or dead, that it should give us pause  
To love, where ordinary folk condemn.

The ones who could the best turn things around,  
But mesmerized by evil that they saw,  
They watched the jackboots tread into the ground  
Their fellow men, their victims of their law.

It wasn't that they didn't see or know.  
Good people doing nothing let truth go.

—Henry White  
*Crown Point, Indiana*

## A Beginning

Midst the torrential rain  
Of a too-late springtime  
My arms extend to a translucent you  
Your face emerges from the mist  
As a sun shines.

I reach through the fog—  
It is enough  
You clasp me.  
We slip through the downpour  
To contain our love.

## A Year Later

Listening to the rain's grip on my life  
Knowing all the pieces of nights  
To spend without you now  
I think of all other nights  
Of my mind's eye drowning.

I want a man not unlike you  
Yet who, too, can see  
The moon in the rain  
Feel the new one in the old  
Moon's arms  
Touch the water turning  
Into wine.

—Erika Hartmann-Hayes  
*Chicago Heights, Illinois*



## Insanity

I whisper  
secrets  
into the bottom  
of the glass  
watching the poison  
as it oozes  
down the sides  
like mourning ribbons  
icy champagne  
will numb those scars  
invisible to  
all eyes  
but mine  
wallowing in misery  
my tongue becomes  
thick like pudding  
and I ride the high out  
with the resolution  
of a seasoned surfer  
knowing I will awake  
in foul-tasting remorse  
and remembering nothing  
but the haunting shadow  
I cannot  
cut  
loose.

—Jill Dimaggio

## Hitting Bottom

Like blinding quicksand  
pulling her down  
gray masks  
funeral black  
through a maze of events  
eating away  
at the flesh  
of a broken heart  
blurring vision  
spirit chokes  
she walks through life  
with wrenching pain  
alone,  
but for two voices  
within. . . .  
the devil  
lies waiting  
coiled in darkness  
the other  
speaks in whispers  
faint, yet relentless  
she hears it well  
"You have a choice,"  
and the seed  
of becoming  
begins.

—Jill Dimaggio  
Boca Raton, Florida

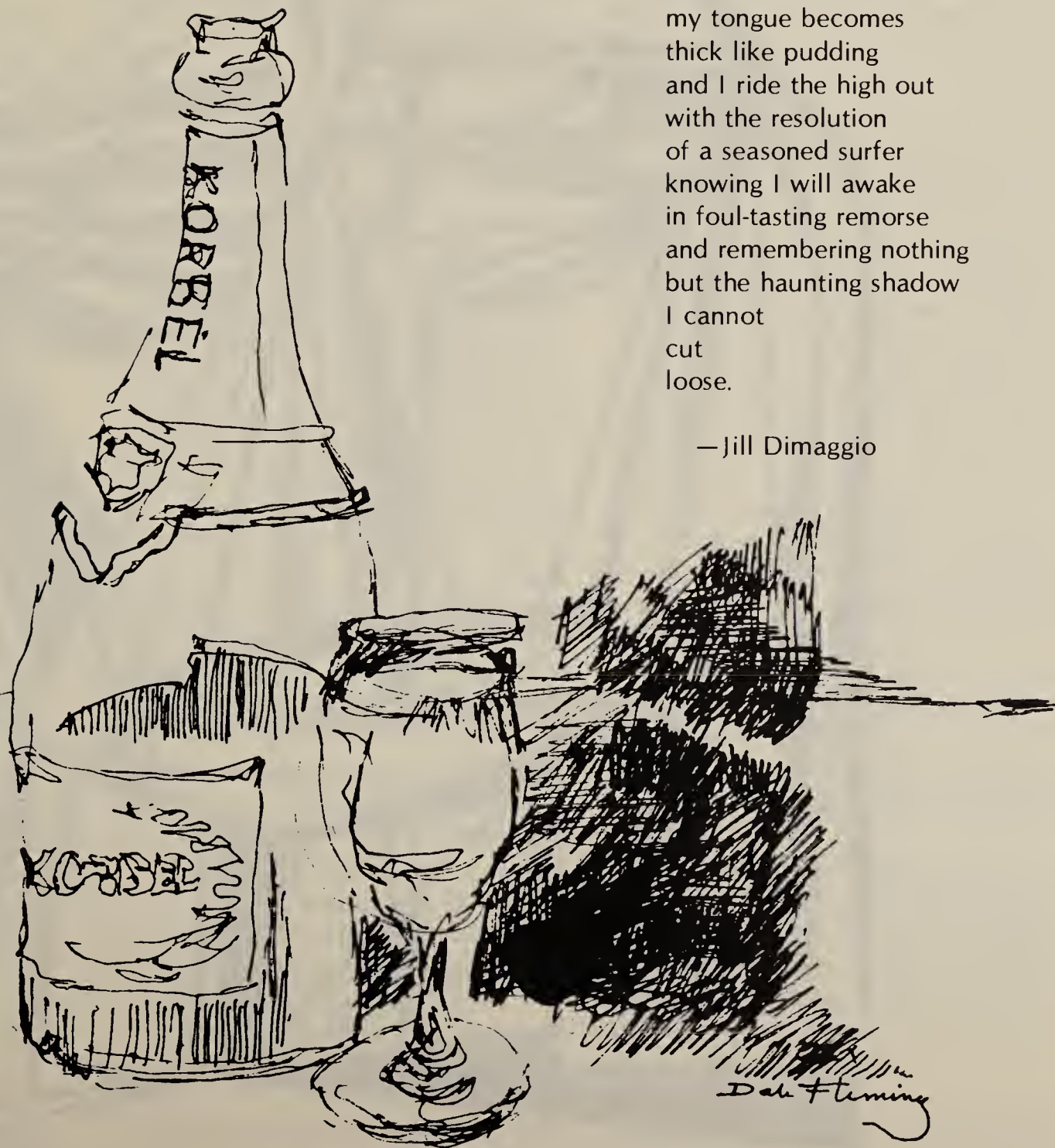


Illustration by Dale Fleming



*Illustration by William Meyer, Jr.*



## THE PREVIOUS CLERK

by  
Kathleen Dehler

"Did the temporary agency explain your job?"

"No, nothing. Just that I was to report to you."

"How long can you stay?"

"A week. My spring break from school is over next Wednesday."

"Well, it's all very simple." Mary, the office manager, pointed to a chair and desk with a computer on it near hers where Carol was to sit. "We fired a clerk last Friday because she couldn't keep the stock records straight. Since she made so many mistakes during her last month, we needed to hire someone to correct them."

Carol nodded her head.

Mary leaned closer to Carol. "If she had just gotten along with us more, I'm sure we could have helped her. For two years she had been doing a fine job. Suddenly, she changed. She just didn't fit in anymore." Mary paused. "You said you're going to college?"

"Graduate school."

"What's your major?"

"Archaeology."

"Well, you'll only have to check numbers on the computer here."

Mary took a large folder filled with green sheets out of a four-drawer file by her desk. "What you have to do is start with this figure on the top of each of these invoices—that's how much steel we had at each warehouse a month ago—and check that the correct amount is listed next to each date on the computer." Mary tapped with her pen the pile of green papers she had put on Carol's desk.

"Now we had deliveries of steel to each warehouse this month," Mary continued, pointing to another column on the terminal, "and you'll have to get those figures from Jack." She pointed across the room to a thin, dark-haired man in his forties.

"It seems quite simple," Carol said.

"Good. If you need any help, just ask."

The first hour went quickly. Most of the numbers were correct and were only three and four digits long. Carol took her time, working for accuracy, checking and rechecking the figures, especially when she came to a mistake. It wasn't long, however, before her eyes began to tire, melting the numbers together.

Carol started looking up from her desk now and then, relaxing, watching people. Jack, with a serious expression on his face while his hands fidgeted, was talking to two salesmen—or, at least, Carol thought they were salesmen, not being able to hear the conversation. They were sitting on chairs in front of Jack's desk, both with identical attache cases opened on their laps.

Carol smiled when she realized she shouldn't have thought of just salesmen when she saw the attache cases. "Go beyond the obvious," her major advisor once wrote on her paper. "Every owner of pottery in a dig probably wasn't an artisan."

Carol turned to look at two women who were sitting at one long table about twenty-five feet from her desk. They were working with pink and yellow sheets, stamping and sorting them. They would occasionally pass a pink sheet from one to the other, but not without a few words and a laugh. They had both smiled at Carol when she had first entered the office, but they hadn't looked at her since then.

Carol looked down again at the green sheets on her desk. She corrected another one of the previous clerk's mistakes.

By this time the green sheets had become very familiar, almost friendly. Carol was reminded of the walk she had to take each day from her apartment to the campus. It was a long, narrow street, a mixture of small, loudly-painted, old homes, a clothes shop, laundromat, hairdresser, and locksmith shop. Carol had thought this

street was hideous when she first walked down it, but slowly the ugliness was forgotten, and she anticipated each oddly-shaped building.

Like this motley street, the green sheets had taken on a personality, while two hours ago they were bland, mute. Carol could now recognize the distinctive 5's made by a clerk at the Buffalo warehouse and the circled totals of a clerk in Denver.

Carol corrected another mistake. She wondered what the previous clerk thought of when she held these sheets. If she had worked here for two years, Carol thought, she must have been able to read much more than the company wanted her to know from these sheets. Perhaps the previous clerk could tell by sloppy or different numbers when a regular clerk from one of the warehouses was on vacation or having a cup of coffee or even just tired.

Carol looked up. Jack was sharpening his pencil by the wall near her desk, and Mary was now talking to Jack's two attache-carrying salesmen.

"Do you need the delivery figures?" Jack asked. She didn't realize she had been staring at him.

"Oh, yes." Carol got up and walked in the direction Jack pointed to another computer.

"Make sure you always use the total from this column." Jack stood behind her as she copies down the numbers. "Before she left, Beth never got those numbers right. I was afraid her mistakes would make me look bad. You know what I ended up doing?"

Carol walked back to her desk with the numbers and with Jack following her.

"I checked her work. I would wait till she left for lunch," Jack said leaning over Carol's desk, "and go over her delivery figures. Mary encouraged me to do it."

Carol was glad Jack's phone rang, and he left to answer it. Beth—so that



was her name. Carol wondered if Beth knew that Jack was correcting some of her errors, but then why were there still some errors? Perhaps he didn't correct them all, or Beth went back again and changed the figures.

"How are you doing?" Mary asked as she walked by. Carol noticed that she looked closely at her work. "You seem to be getting the hang of it. It's soon going to be lunch time. Why don't you join us?"

Carol preferred to eat her sandwich as she read a book at a nearby park. It was a warm spring day, and it felt good to be away from the office and the computer and the green invoices.

Returning to her desk, Carol was sure she hadn't left the papers where they were now. Jack, or anyone, had a perfect right to go over her work, Carol thought, but she wished she had been asked and that it had not been done while she was gone.

Carol sat down at her desk feeling awkward, insulted, even betrayed. She was an outsider in this closed office society, she thought. New members must go through an initiation, prove themselves by being alternately watched and ignored. That, obviously, is their ritual.

Beth must have done something to become an outsider again, Carol thought. She was a full-fledged member—they all seem to admit that—but she fell from favor, or committed some crime against this office society, and then was treated as an outsider once more—an initiate. Beth's only weapon was to make errors with the numbers these people had given many hours of their lives to record.

Carol looked up and saw Mary and two men she didn't recognize standing by the office door. She sensed being pointed out, though no one did anything out of the ordinary. She realized

she could have been the object of attention because she was new, someone different in the office. Carol decided to get lost in her work but had difficulty escaping into her previous pattern. Each time she came to one of Beth's errors, she felt a warm sensation, a glow, enough to throw off any working rhythm. She began to look forward to each mistake, anticipate it, relish it as a moment of contact with another mind.

By mid-afternoon, Carol realized she needed more stock figures from Jack.

"Remember which column to look at, Beth," Jack said. If he had looked away from his computer, he would have seen Carol smile. She didn't mind being called "Beth" because by now they had become friends.

After going back to her desk, Carol slowed the pace of her work and looked around the room as if it were a lost civilization's ruins from which she was trying to cull the motivations, the values of the inhabitants. As she saw the high windows, the gray desks, the black file cabinets, the gray and brown tile floor, she mechanically took the next green sheet from her thinning pile.

She corrected another mistake. Then it happened. As she changed a seven to a nine on the computer, it all became clear. She quickly checked again the past few invoices. There was intelligence behind this chaos. The previous clerk had made a mistake on every third, then seventh, then ninth number.

But what about Jack's corrections, Carol thought. Beth had to know he was doing it because the pattern of errors was still there. Beth must have gone back and erased his changes.

"Would you like a cup of coffee?" Mary asked. "You can go to the cafeteria and get it with the rest of us."

"Maybe in a minute," Carol tried to stall. She didn't want to leave Beth to

join the others. Meeting a stranger's mind is even more compelling than meeting eyes. It would have been impolite to Beth, so tangible, so real she had become.

Carol continued to work on a few more invoices before she came to another mistake. Beth had typed in a four when the number should have been an eight. Carol reached to correct the error and incorrectly pressed a seven. Realizing her error, Carol was about to correct it, but she didn't.

She couldn't turn her back on Beth now. Beth had befriended her, had been her guide through this office, had given her a Rosetta Stone in these green sheets to this civilization's language. Carol quickly, guiltily put the invoice on the corrected pile. The next two of Beth's errors she corrected, but she quietly ignored the third.

Carol left uncorrected every third error. She never knew why later societies often tampered with the past, but here she was leaving only a trace of the previous clerk's message.

"We'll see you tomorrow," Mary said as she cleaned up her desk. "It's five o'clock."

"I hadn't noticed," Carol said. She knew she couldn't come back and work at this place tomorrow, having made deliberate mistakes for the past hour and a half.

She nodded to Mary as she left, not even looking in the direction of Jack or the two women. She'd call the temporary agency and tell them something came up that made it impossible for her to return to this steel company.

As she walked quickly out of the building, Carol smiled, realizing that she felt as if she had preserved a key to a civilization from destruction—or at least a part of it—by not erasing completely the code of the previous clerk.

*Kathleen Dehler resides in New Hyde Park, New York.*



### One Thursday

I scribble affirmations for your heart  
My office is a web of spread sheets  
Door half closed between phone calls  
I write a script for healing in the present tense  
Use God's name your name mine  
Illumine physical detritus with soul flecks  
Looming inward  
Take the thought of skin into my hands  
The fragrance and the beauty of your hands  
And light within your look  
This morning shining through the blinds  
Turned upward as the eyes in meditation  
Behind half-closed lids

—Sheila E. Murphy  
*Phoenix, Arizona*

### On the Phones

On the phones, you doodle  
On the cactus,  
Undaunted by the pricks.  
The coffee, at the brim,  
Gets cold. The lines salute  
In Brezhnev's finest color.  
Your answers, your borders,  
Are over-run. You are speaking  
Upper outer Maine in South  
Miami. The cubical is like  
The city; the "In" bin  
Two blocks from the rolodex  
Across the downtown desk,  
Crapped up by midday traffic.  
You put out the ugly eyes,  
Red and blinking, one by one.  
Like the Chinese minister  
Of population, you make  
Magicmarker faces on the cactus  
Until the city lets you go.

—Brian Mahoney  
*Palm Harbor, Florida*

### For Bonnie

You are  
violets  
cascading down  
an emerald countryside.

You are  
sunlight  
shining on  
a warm, tawny shore.

You are  
breezes  
blowing coolly  
across an August afternoon.

You are  
stars  
glistening radiantly  
in a raven sky.

You are  
a rainbow  
glowing magnificently  
giving hope  
to those who know you.

—Natrana F. Wilson  
*Highland, Indiana*

## Red Cars

As a boy he knew it,  
he knew cars and trucks  
were supposed to be red,  
he knew this before  
his elementary teachers  
and wives and conforming  
business world taught him  
to prefer sober white  
or brown or black cars  
in a redless world.  
Now at a frazzled forty-nine  
he needs and wants a red car  
with which to shift  
into a boylike gear  
a few minutes each day  
and he needs but does not want  
to reflect on red—on what  
and why red does what it does.  
He will drive right by  
this need to reflect.

—Rod Farmer  
*Farmington, Maine*

Your eyes  
twinkle  
like raindrops  
glistening  
on emerald-spring grass.

Your smile  
pleases  
like a rainbow  
arching across the sky  
after a mid-summer storm.

Your voice  
refreshes  
like morning's golden sunrise  
promising warmth  
to night-chilled earth.

Your friendship  
assures  
like summer's amber rose  
newly opened  
after snow-cold winter frost.

—Natrona F. Wilson  
*Highland, Indiana*

## Getting Out of the Forest

Famine: the witch  
Eats her own  
Candy house.  
Father and stepmother  
Are bickering  
Over bread.  
The little birds  
Have died, and the wood  
Is silent.  
You leave me a trail  
Of crumbs. I am afraid  
To follow.

—J. B. Goodenough  
*Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania*

## Haiku

Oh Japanese girl,  
you have made the immense world  
into little ball.

—Michael Downey  
*South Bend, Indiana*



## Life After Love

I could say I forget  
the color of your eyes,  
the way  
we made love so hurriedly  
and secretive, as though afraid  
in the hotel room;  
before we had time to return  
to find any lingering evidence  
like fingerprints,  
stale perfume or smudged air:  
the sheets immaculate

But I remember everything myself,  
what happened, the ambience—  
what did not happen as well;  
amid the falling atmosphere  
which I give you now  
again repeatedly,  
more wild and passionate  
than the blood  
warmed by cognac, yet chilling  
our breath on the window: where  
figures remain distant and perfectly still

—Dean Baker  
*Toronto, Ontario, Canada*

## Heron's Hill, Late June

We should go back  
to the car. See the thunderhead  
climb. Feel it chill  
in its own windward dark.

But still we lie here,  
the old red blanket keeping  
our burned legs from  
the blue-eyed grass.

Here at the top of the world,  
we breathe the fields  
below, roused by the storm.  
Hear the rain murmur close.

Closer.  
Whisper loud  
through the yellow door  
of the wheat.

—Mary Eaton  
*Kansas City, Missouri*



*Illustration by Dale Fleming*

### Bringing home the tree

The scene is quintessential L.L.Bean:  
a horse, a sled, a boy, a man,  
heading for a farmhouse and red barn,  
their figures blurred by snow.  
The dead tree lies horizontal on the sleigh.

Set up and tied with guy ropes,  
its branches thaw and settle  
like feathers, or a satin skirt.

The scent of spruce is piercing  
as first memory.  
Unashamed, the adults stoop  
and disappear under the branches,  
sheltered, brushed by the kind,  
dry hands of needles.

—Gillian Norris-Szanto  
*St. Davids, Pennsylvania*

### Woods Thoughts

Elevation counts.  
Getting your head  
Above the level of the mob  
Makes all the difference  
In your view of things.  
Nearly dark now, here,  
In the hushed and waiting wood  
Among dead leaves and mosses;  
But the high-borne dancing tiptop leaves  
Still glow with solar power.  
Here and there it spills down slanting trunks  
To fill erratic fragile pools;  
Random wavering skylights  
Form evanescent ponds across the forest floor.

Perhaps, if one flew far and fast enough  
Your illumination could be constant.  
But that enlightenment comes high.  
Remember Icarus, *et al.*  
Even mountaintop visions wane and fade  
As the world turns. Keep the lighthouses manned,  
Keep the batteries charged.

—Ray Mizer  
*Greencastle, Indiana*

### Exhaust

At rush hour one morning  
watching the world's natural resources  
spiral out of the exhaust of the car idling  
in front of me while the woman listens  
to an officer's explanation of the hold up:  
injury accident a mile south—

Thinking of our exhaust, exhaustion,  
our population of worker bees setting out  
to conquer the world each day. How we have  
succeeded!

Timber to matchsticks  
forest to grazeland  
the world off-loaded  
into our shining backyards—

These few thoughts brought on by some driver  
headed the wrong way on the freeway,  
the slight inconvenience, and miles  
of idling cars in the morning sun—glowworms  
listening to the morning news.

Somewhere at the other end of the world  
perhaps the last few representatives of a species  
nod goodnight to the stars—

—Peter Brett  
*Ross, California*



## Consumers

There used to be a woods  
Across the street,  
Where locust trees bloomed in May  
And billowed white,  
Sending sweetness through the air.

Flashing red-wings  
Rested there  
And lent their liquid song to early day.  
Bob Whites called one to one  
Like old friends in recognition.

Now a store is in its place,  
A MEGA MART, no less,  
Supplying endlessly  
Consumers' needs.

People crowd in every day,  
And trucks supply with regularity.  
The fragrances are from exhausts  
And incinerator fumes.

Bag boys push the laden carts  
To cars all day  
And into night,  
When floodlights bathe  
The parking lot like misplaced moons.

When snow falls  
The still of night is broken  
With scrape of plows:  
Back and forth,  
Back and forth,  
To clear the lot  
For next day's horde  
To fill their needs.

Red-wings are gone  
And Bob Whites call in other woods.  
Locust trees  
Bless other space  
That has not yet been consumed.

—Helen May-Wing  
*Hammond, Indiana*

## February 10

Old bridge  
splintered and worn  
you have seen busier days . . .  
like when papa went fishing,  
got angry,  
and threw mud on Amy Sue;  
then sailed his turquoise kite  
till it ripped on Jones' barn,  
still standing near the road . . .

or the parade  
to honor Benjamin Paul  
proudly lost in the Korean War.  
Noble horses,  
black carriages crept slowly  
over the smooth firm oak  
held steady by shiny nails  
that penetrated deep . . .  
like young men  
in their quest for adventure.

Now,  
your days are long and thin,  
steps to your door  
grown gray with history and weeds.

No one comes to  
tell their dreams . . .  
throwing pennies  
in the waters below.

No one comes to pass time . . .  
waiting for life  
to meet them in the middle.  
Quiet, lost in thought  
you sit.

Age spots,  
frail ribs,  
skin loose and falling . . .  
your foundation  
has many years set.  
Flexible with the feeling  
of many young hearts,  
strong from the pounding  
of many old problems . . .

like mine, dear father,  
like mine.

—William E. Passera  
*Ridgewood, New York*

## WINNING

by  
Daniel Helpingstine

I never wanted my son to be like Dick Ryan. There was a time when I liked Ryan and even considered him my friend. Still, even then I thought Dick had never grown up and wasn't what many people thought him to be. I tried, in so many words, to tell John this. Then I walked into his room one day to find Ryan's poster taped to the wall next to some of my columns.

Many of my columns were about Ryan and that included the day he reported to the White Sox spring training camp for the first time. Ryan was likeable back then, but that was before the money and the national publicity. I expected him to change some with all the pressure, but suddenly he thought he had to argue with everyone every time he didn't get his way. Dick no longer got along with his manager, the umpires and his teammates. I didn't see much to admire.

Our parting of the ways began when I wrote one bad thing about him. I had thought I was pointing out the obvious when I said he was slow. I suggested that since he would never pick up speed that he learn to run the bases with better judgement. His reaction was an overreaction.

He didn't confront me directly at first. Rumors went around that he wanted to stuff me in a locker upside down. Ryan then tried to prove me wrong in a game a day later.

With two outs in the seventh inning, Ryan led off second base. The White Sox were tied with the Tigers 1-1. The Tiger pitcher glanced at Ryan and then sent a pitch to the plate. "Strike," yelled the umpire with his right arm shooting up. Standing up, the catcher acted as if he wanted to throw to second to try to pick Ryan off but instead returned the ball to his pitcher and the drama started again. The pitcher checked Ryan and I wondered why Dick was getting all of the attention because we all knew how slow he

was. On the next pitch, the Sox hitter met the ball squarely, hitting a solid line drive into left field, and it dropped in front of the outfielder for a single. The fans were on their feet yelling and screaming. With a ball hit that hard, I didn't think Ryan should try to score. Apparently, the third base coach thought the same thing because he was halfway down the line, arms up in the air, signalling Ryan to stop. Determined to score, Dick ran past his coach. The ball came in from the outfield and the Tiger catcher waited to tag the would-be run scorer. Ryan tried to avoid the tag by sliding to the first base side of the plate in hopes he could reach back for the base with his right hand. Dust flew everywhere, but I could see the catcher easily apply the tag. Even with all the noise, I could hear the ump make the out call. The inning was over. After a chorus of boos, the fans sat back down. Ryan picked himself up and dusted the dirt off his pants.

I watched Ryan slowly walk out to the field. His head was down as he took his position at first base. His little base running escapade proved me right, but I knew I wasn't vindicated in his eyes. If anything, he was more angry than he was the day my story ran.

The game remained tied until Ryan led off the tenth inning. On the second pitch, he lifted a high drive to left field. The outfielder drifted back until he was at the wall. He watched helplessly as the ball fell behind him into a sea of arms and hands of fans wanting a souvenir. Ryan had a home run and the White Sox had a win.

Forgetting what had happened in the seventh inning, the fans cheered wildly. After touching second base, Ryan glanced up at the press box. I couldn't help but be amused because I had never seen him look up at us before.

I had to talk to one of the Tiger players and I went to their locker room first. By the time I got to the White Sox

locker room, several reporters were already around Ryan. He was standing in front of his locker, stripped to the waist, a beer in his right hand. I caught him at the end of answering a question.

"I went up there guessing curve ball," he said, "and when I hit it, I knew I had taken him downtown." He looked directly at me. "Hey, Sanders," he said, "did you like my tenth inning shot?"

"Sure did," I replied, "but I wanted to ask about your little bit of stupid base running in the seventh. Why did you run through that stop sign?"

"Look, Sanders, you have to be aggressive sometimes. And when you're aggressive, things don't always work out like you want."

"Is that what you call it? Being aggressive? I call it being slow."

"Why are you always writing bad things about me? I won the game today."

"I don't always write bad things about you. I only said that you're not fast and you proved it in the seventh inning."

"This press conference is over," he said and he pushed himself past us. As he headed towards the manager's office, he came close to me. I expected to see anger in his face but there was real hurt there. I never thought of Ryan being a sensitive guy.

At home that evening, I received a cool reception from my wife.

"Would you please tell your son," Susan said, "that losing a Little League game isn't the end of the world?"

Susan cared for me but she never cared for sports of any kind. When we met in college, I impressed her by saying I wanted to be a writer. She wasn't so impressed when she found out I wanted to write about sports.

From the first time John walked, Susan accepted that he would play sports. Her only request was that I put



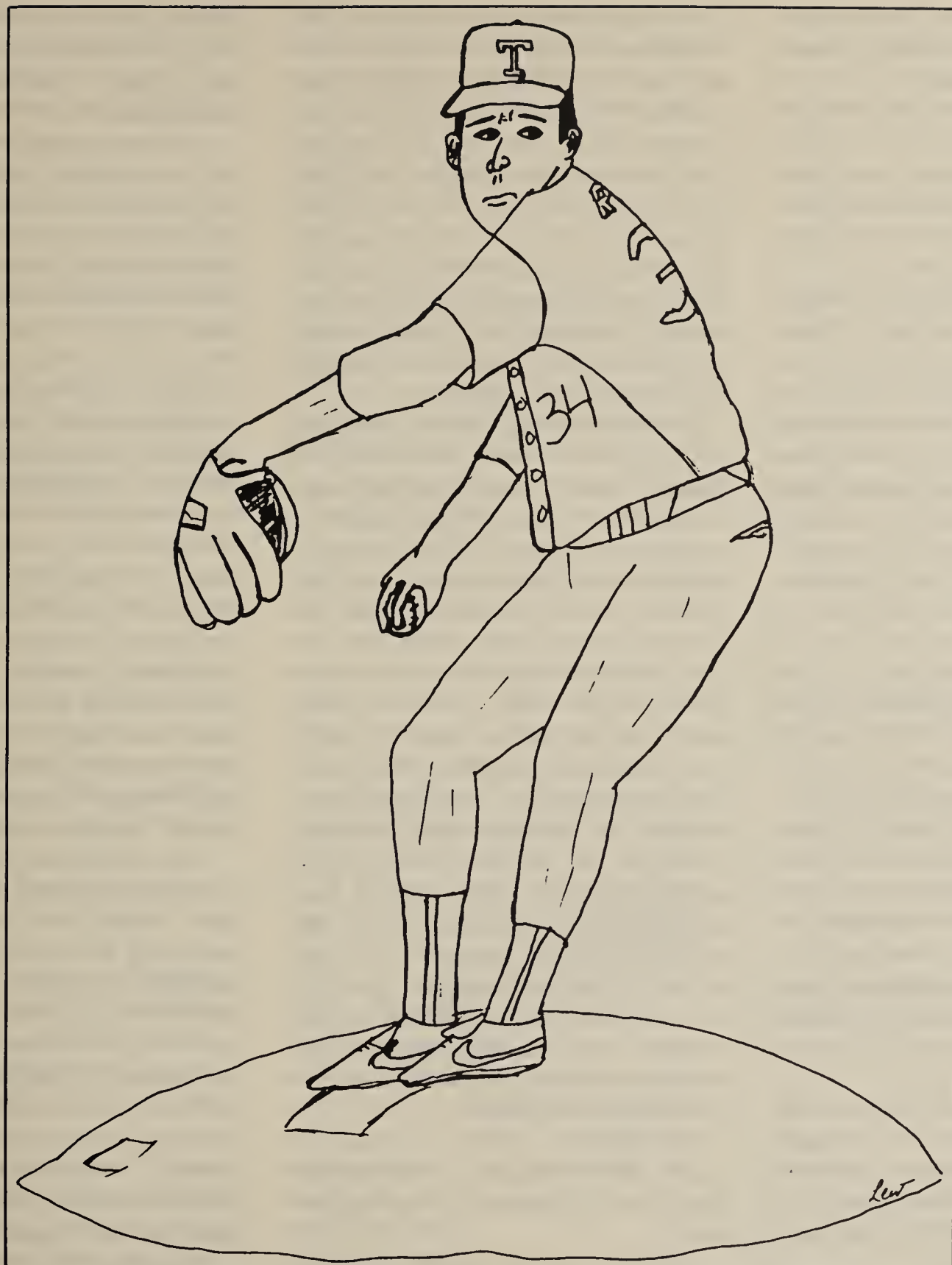


Illustration by Lewis R. Lain, Jr., Age 12  
Robinson School, Crown Point, Indiana

things in proper perspective. She was forever having me remind John that winning wasn't important but good effort was. I tried my best to impress that value on John. I didn't tell Susan, but it wasn't working. John hated losing and took no consolation in coming in second. It didn't matter what it was. He didn't like losing a game of cards.

"Okay," I said to Susan, "I'll talk to him."

His bedroom was like a sports gallery. A few of my columns were taped to the wall next to Ryan's poster. A White Sox pennant sat on his dresser and in front of it was a ball autographed by the team. I knew he had a ticket from his first major league game

hidden safely in one of his drawers. Sports magazines littered the floor.

He was on his bed and didn't hear me when I came in. No doubt he was replaying the events of the day's game in his mind. He was startled when he first noticed me as he let out a little gasp. If he was anything like me, he preferred to endure his pain alone.

"I heard your team lost today," I said as I sat down at the foot of the bed.

"Yeah," John replied, "and it was all my fault. I was pitching and we were ahead 1-0 going into the last inning. I gave up two runs and we lost."

"Sounds like you pitched a darn good game if you gave up only two runs."

"I didn't pitch good enough. I should've had a shutout. I should've won."

"John, the Sox beat the Tigers today 2-1. How do you think those Tiger pitchers feel? They could've won, too."

"I bet they feel as bad as I do."

"You're probably right," I said, "but they know they can't win every game even when they play well. They feel bad but they look forward to the next game."

"I know, Dad, but I could've won. I just needed a couple more outs."

"John, we talked about all of this before you started playing Little League. I told you winning isn't everything. Now, I don't want any more



pouting after every loss. You'll never have fun that way." He hung his head "What's the matter now?"

"You sound like Mom and I thought you'd understand."

"That's just it. I do understand. I had the same problems when I played ball and I'm telling you, you have to learn to be a good loser."

He said nothing. I knew I wasn't getting through to him and I tried another approach.

"You pitched well today," I said, "so don't try to take all of the responsibility for the loss. Let some of your teammates take some of the blame. After all, they only gave you one run and that's not much to work with." I gently placed my hand on his shoulder. "Come on. It's time you got ready for supper."

At dinner, John tried to act as if nothing had happened. He took part in our mealtime discussion as he usually did and ate everything on his plate. It was obvious, however, that he was depressed. His face was lined with pain and he stared down at his food from time to time, still dwelling on his disappointing loss. Susan's reaction had turned from anger to bewilderment. She started to say something to him, stopped and looked at me. I shrugged even though I knew exactly what John was going through.

Afterwards, I went for a walk. It was a quiet summer night with most people content to stay in their air-conditioned homes. Wanting to think without distractions, I was grateful for the solitude.

I thought about my own Little League days. Like John, I had been a pitcher and also, like John, I was good. One year I was slated to start the season opener. The night before the game I couldn't sleep. Scary fantasies of the opposing team pounding lumps on me ran through my head. I imagined what the talk around the league would be. Tom Sanders, the guy who is supposed to be such a great pitcher, folds in first game. For a short time, I wished someone else was pitching the game. But that was only for a short time. It was a honor to start the first game and I wouldn't let anyone take the ball out of my hands no matter how scared I was.

In the first inning, I kept thinking, "If I can only get by the first batter, I'll be

okay. I just need that first batter." He swung and missed at my first pitch and my next two offerings were balls. Not wanting the count to go to three and one, I let up a little and put the ball over the middle of the plate. The batter hit the ball hard but it was on the ground and right at our third baseman. Our infielder scooped the ball up and threw to first in plenty of time. With the out, my butterflies were gone. I struck out the next two batters and walked to our bench full of confidence.

In the fifth inning, we were ahead 1-0 but I had gotten myself into a little jam. Runners were on second and third with only one out. The next hitter topped a grounder right back to me. As I had seen in major league games, I held the ball for a few seconds to keep the runners at their bases. I then threw to first. The ball arrived a good five steps ahead of the hitter. I was surprised when the umpire flattened his palms with a safe call. Forgetting the umpire was my father's age, I took a few steps towards him and demanded an explanation for the call. He calmly told me my first baseman didn't have his foot on the bag when he caught the ball. My wrath's direction changed from the umpire to the first baseman. I glared at my teammate and he looked at me meekly. I went back to the pitcher's mound and fumed. My manager came out to calm me down.

"Settle down, Tom," he said, "it wasn't Mike's fault. He had his foot on the base. The hitter is the umpire's son."

That piece of news had the opposite effect as I became angrier. I could forgive my teammate for an error, or even the umpire for making a bad call, but I had no use for cheaters. All I could think about was the crummy spot the ump put me in because he wanted his son on first base and was willing to do anything to get him there.

My anger worked in my favor at first. I threw the three fastest pitches of my life and struck out the next hitter for the second out of the inning. On what I hoped would be the last batter, I worked the count to three and two. If I walked him, a run would be forced in and the game would be tied. I concentrated on getting the ball over. I did so, but I didn't have much speed on it. With an almost vicious swing, the

batter ripped a line drive past our diving third baseman and into left field for a single. Two runs scored. We would lose 2-1.

After each game, we were expected to go to the other side and shake hands. This was to be followed by a post game pep talk from our manager. I didn't shake anyone's hand and I didn't stay for the pep talk. I walked off the field, bitter that a win had been taken from me.

At our practice the next day, my manager warned me that if I ever did anything like that again, I'd be cut from the team. Despite the threat, my emotional displays on the field continued. My reputation as a poor sport was well known around the league. I was taunted by names and shouts from opposing teams. Things like "Jerkhead," "Weirdo," and "We want a pitcher, not a glass of water." Stupid things, but back then they hurt. Those were my peers yelling insults at me. I had thought my talent would win me respect, but that was far from the case.

As I circled my street and started back down my block, I wished my manager would have disciplined me in some way. Instead of giving me the star treatment, he should have put me on the bench for a few games or done something other than merely embarrass me in front of the team. After that, I wished he would have sat down and talked to me to find out what was wrong. It would have been nice if he would have cared about me like he did about my pitching arm.

Stopping in front of my house, I looked up to see John's bedroom light. He was up there alone, and that's the way I sometimes felt when I was on the pitcher's mound. Everything was up to me, always up to me. And effort wasn't enough. Results were all that mattered. John and I were alike in that way.

John never liked me to come to any of his games. My being there would only make him nervous, he said. I found it strange that I had spent so much time watching people like Dick Ryan play but had seen my own son only a few times.

I went the next time John pitched. I didn't tell him I was coming but I did have a talk with him the night before. I



told him to do the best he could and that neither I nor anyone else would be disappointed if he lost. He listened to me patiently but I had the feeling my words had little meaning.

When I arrived, there was a murmuring in the bleachers. I had had nothing to do with John's Little League and most of the parents thought I was a snob. Remarks like, "he's so busy with the major leagues, he can't bother with Little League," found their way back to me. In reality, any connection with the league by me would only put more pressure on John. It was important to him to make it on his own and not because his father had some power and pull.

For a moment, I thought the little commotion may have gained John's attention, but he was too busy with his warm-up pitches to notice anything else. I couldn't help but be proud of him as I watched. He looked so much like a professional and did everything as I had taught him. As he wound up, he leaned back on his right, in order to get his whole body behind the pitch. After releasing the ball, he ended up facing directly at home, his glove up, ready to snare anything hit back his way. Warming up, John at first lobbed the ball to his catcher, gradually getting his arm loose. By his last practice pitch, he was ready. He zinged it towards the plate and it hit the catcher's glove with a popping sound. Finally the umpire dusted off home plate with his little broom and he yelled, "Play ball!"

The lead-off batter stepped up and was greeted by shouts of encouragement from the bleachers and his team. In turn, the remainder of the crowd and John's team did the same for him. Memories of my days on the mound came to me.

John let go of his first pitch and the umpire yelled, "Strike one!" There was a smattering of applause among more encouragement from the crowd to the batter. "It only takes one," some said along with, "That's it, John, put it in there." John went into his motion again and his second pitch was on its way to the plate. The hitter swung with all his strength but he only ticked the ball, sending a dribbler between the pitcher's mound and third base. John was on it in an instant, grabbing it with

his bare hand and throwing to first all in one motion. The ball arrived a second ahead of the runner and there was one out. Applause followed. John's play was as good as any major leaguer could have made. He finished the inning by striking out the next two hitters.

John continued to pitch well as the game progressed. The trouble was that he was trailing 1-0 going into the last inning. I feared he would lose another close game and I didn't know what I would say to him if that happened. Sure, he was pitching well again, but I knew from experience how tough it was to lose one close game after another.

In the top of the last inning, John got the first batter out on a grounder to short and struck out the second hitter on three pitches. But the third kid up hit a line drive over third base and went into second base standing up for a double. The double was only the fourth hit John had given up in the game.

A tall, lanky kid came up next. He had scored the only run of the game and had two solid hits off John. I could see by the way the kid stepped into the box that he knew what he was doing. And with his success in his two previous at bats, I hoped John respected his ability and pitched accordingly.

There was no need for me to worry. John stared at the hitter. He knew who this kid was. I remembered having the same feeling when I was playing. I didn't forget when somebody had beaten me and I knew what I had to do to turn the tables.

The batter swung at John's first offering and fouled it straight back. He had a good swing and John was lucky he didn't make better contact. On the second pitch, John did something I had never seen him do: he threw sidearm. The batter must have been surprised, too, because he didn't take the bat off his shoulder. "Strike," was the umpire's call after the ball whizzed over the outside part of the plate. I thought for a moment that John might come back with another sidearm pitch but he came right up over the top. This time the ball was on the inner half of the plate and the hitter swung so hard he went down to one knee. He missed. He was out and the inning was over.

Half of the crowd erupted. I couldn't help but stand up and clap, too. John

walked off the mound as if nothing was happening. He wasn't going to do anything to show up the other team. It had taken a lot of heart and guts to come through like that. I was proud he was my son.

John's efforts looked like they would all be for nothing. The first two hitters for his team were easy outs. One more out and the game would be over.

Things changed quickly. The third hitter, someone whom I had seen around the house before but didn't know, hit a line drive into the left center field that split the outfielders. He pulled up at second with an easy double.

The next hitter was a lefty and he hit a smash right back at the pitcher, who was only able to slow the ball down. The ball stopped a few feet behind the mound. By the time the pitcher recovered it, everybody was safe. The tying run was at third and the winning run was at first.

A kid from down the block by the name of Blanchard was next to get a chance to swing the bat. The first pitch hit him on the arm, sending him to first. The bases were loaded.

John was next. He was in a position to win his own ball game. It appeared that the pitcher would make things easy for him by throwing three straight balls. The fourth pitch was a strike, right down the middle as John didn't offer at it at all. He was swinging at the next pitch but missed. With the count three and two, the game hung in the balance. The pitch came inside and John leaned back slightly to avoid being hit. He started off towards first, thinking he had a walk. He was shocked when the umpire yelled out, "Strike three!"

John wasn't the only person who was shocked. In my mind, there was no way that pitch was a strike. The ump had called a good game up to that point. I couldn't believe he could make such a mistake.

Not caring that the ump was an adult, John ran over to confront him. "How could you say that was a strike when it almost hit me?" John yelled. "Do you want the other team to win?"

His manager came to pull John away. Offering no resistance, John started back towards his dugout. On the way, he threw his bat, then helmet.



Boos came from the crowd and someone behind me said, "He's nothing but a crybaby. He's only happy when he wins." I would have stuck up for my son if what was said hadn't been true.

Originally, I had planned to leave before John could see me. After his tantrum, I decided to stay and drive him home. We needed to have a talk.

As in my playing days, it was the custom for each manager to talk to his team before they went home. The winning side was done first and the umpire walked off with his arm around one of the players. Obviously, they were father and son and I understood the bad call. The ump didn't care how his son won, just so he won.

My harsh feelings towards John softened a bit but I still wanted to talk to him. His manager finally finished his post-game talk and the kids began to leave. Everyone but John. Alone he sat on the edge of the bench. His manager noticed and said something to him. John didn't answer and the manager left.

I stepped out into full view, but John didn't see me. He looked out to center field at the scoreboard where the game's numbers had been. He put his glove on his hand, socked his fist into its pocket a few times and then let it fall to the ground. I was about to call out to him when he started to cry.

I had seen my son cry before but it hadn't been in years. There were tears for me, too, when I played and I had cried them alone. It didn't seem to me that John cared if anyone saw him or not. Despite this, I didn't approach him. I thought it was better to leave him alone.

Walking to the car, I fumed about the umpire. I hadn't cared much about the game until I saw what it did to John. "Damn him," I kept saying about the ump because I couldn't think of anything else to say. The damns started to run together and when I got in my car, I slammed the door in anger.

"Damn that ump," I said again and I knew it wasn't just the ump who

cheated John. It was that ump who cheated, who looked me in the eye when he gave a phony explanation for his call. I started five after that and won four of them. But I was never the same, not as a player or as a person.

"Damn him," I said again and pounded the steering wheel. I felt moisture on my face and looked into the rear view mirror and saw the tears. When I'd seen John, I hadn't just seen my son. I had seen myself. No matter what I did or whatever I would do, the memories would never leave me alone. I could never make up for the loss and would never forget that feeling of being cheated.

I had never wanted my son to be like Dick Ryan. Yet, not only was he like Ryan, he was like me. They say major leaguers are men playing a boy's game. They're wrong. They are boys playing a man's game. Ryan, John and I were all children. We would always be children.

*Daniel Helpingstine resides in Merrillville, Indiana.*

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### Nintendo

A child once so active  
a questioner of the universe  
  
grown to an almost man  
  
unlimited potential  
finding fulfillment  
in manipulation  
of a tiny  
man  
on the television screen

—Cyndy Gribas  
Schererville, Indiana

### The Little Things We Lose

Buttons from shirts or blouses, retrieved,  
yet missing on the day we thread a needle,  
toothpaste caps, lone postage stamps,  
reviews and recipes clipped from magazines,  
vanishing keys, coins that slip down cracks,  
storage jar lids, safety pins and tacks,  
letters that we always meant to answer:  
their stubborn absence frustrates us so  
by implying that we're careless or forgetful,  
but more because the vacancies they leave  
remind us of much else we stand to lose.

—Julian Gitzen  
Malvern, Victoria, Australia



### A Kid on a Bike

About seven p.m.,  
bright as noon,  
he rides his bike  
up and down  
the gravel road,  
past my window  
that views  
a trailer top,  
a Baptist Church,  
and a garden beginning  
to sprout.  
An abandoned snowmobile  
shines black  
in a day with no night,  
a rusty water drum  
tones close to  
the house's color,  
yet the kid keeps  
riding back and forth  
as if grooved  
to the road,  
tracked in,  
and I picture  
his life  
already at six  
going back and forth  
until death.

—Fr. Benedict Auer, O.S.B.  
*Lacey, Washington*

### Indian Summer

warm  
sun-baked days  
turning  
to frosty  
apple cider nights

glorious  
ribbons  
of scarlet,  
bronze and magenta  
whirring  
in autumn breezes

home-made cinnamon applesauce  
slowly cooking  
in the kitchen

children  
raking leaves  
into huge hills  
of russet and gold

paper-crisp cornstalks  
guarding  
round  
orange  
pumpkins

blue skies  
dotted with geese  
journeying  
to their winter haven

fall leaves  
filling the air  
with their distinct  
heavy  
scent

summer's farewell  
lingering long  
into winter's welcome

—Kathleen McCarthy Kozuch  
*Griffith, Indiana*

for Delfin Flores

in purest being  
you exist

you live  
in the high  
blue-green rolling  
of the sea

you live  
in the laughter  
of the wind  
as it builds bright  
through the grasses  
of the dune

you live  
in the sea-birds  
singing  
silver and high  
against the golden curve  
of summer afternoon

your spirit  
bore witness  
to the sacred joy  
of life,  
and now  
your soul  
is wrapped  
in perfect light

—Charles B. Tinkham  
*Hammond, Indiana*

*Originally published in The Times*

The Kwangju American Cultural Center

The vacant building of the American Cultural Center,  
now an abode of silence, reluctantly  
receives a visitor, unlocking  
two padlocks and an iron-barred gate;  
a strip of empty air is hung at the flagpole  
where the Star Spangled Banner had been fluttering

forty-two years. What then has America left here,  
80 Hwangkum-dong, very near the 5.18 Square  
where the citizens in the bloody whirlwind screamed for  
Democracy and Liberty?

The dust sitting mute on chairs in the reading room,  
the iron bars stark at attention in window frames,  
bricks, closed doors, panes of bulletproof glass,

and some questions unquenchable in everyone's mind . . .

Ah, the land's old cries—several sparrows are  
scattering in the quadrangle of the American  
Cultural Center; I gaze up into the deep blue heaven  
through the shadows falling to pieces. One heaven of  
five thousand years the Korean paulownia branches support.

To where winds this road now? Prophetic songs rise on wings  
above the scars and separate land,  
breaking the heavily-built white silence, history turns  
its hidden dark face above the amicable hands  
that have been shaking forty-four years. Yet you would say:

Self-reliance doesn't lie in blaming others for your own  
sores nor in isolating yourself. We'd better learn  
from a tree how to be in touch with winds and how to grow  
without bending to a seasonal wind. Then as we  
might open Korean Cultural Centers in any city  
of the U.S., why can't the Americans open theirs here?

The vacant building of the American Cultural Center  
in the heart of Kwangju City, drearier than ever,  
utters monosyllables in metallic voice, hardly  
understood, closing its iron-barred gate  
and two padlocks as a visitor goes out.

—Chang Young-Gil  
*Kwangju, Korea*



### Robin Risen To

Robin risen to  
warbling solo;  
droplets of dew on

windshield, cool morning;  
intricate motions of wife's  
developing feelings

attract the  
artist to his  
calling,

sources for  
wit to  
accrue for display.

—Michael Kulycky  
*Evanston, Illinois*

### Quercus suber

You were among the last leaves  
to let go of the cork oak  
in which you were born.  
North wind carried you  
to a southern field,  
first flight as painless  
as a coma, a caress.  
Smothered under snow  
until spring opens champagne.

Unlike the white rabbit  
riding in the cockpit  
of an ace chicken hawk  
for crossing a snowless knoll  
I want to fly on my own  
when my time arrives  
to let go of one world,  
lie dormant for awhile,  
grab on to a better one.

—Thomas Kretz  
*Rome, Italy*

### Entropy

i  
After it got too cold to work,  
God just sat there, looking at  
His hands.

ii  
Would you go into these dim nineteenth-century  
Trees with me, at the edge of the  
Photograph? I have not touched  
Another human being for more than twenty  
Years, except that once in a Boston  
Bookstall, my hand met hers accidentally  
Over Proust.

iii  
In the Remington paintings  
Horses thunder or stand and  
Wait quietly, their muscles  
Outlined, at rest: browns and greys,  
Appaloosas and paints. These are real horses and  
Not the idea of a horse, which is merely  
A few black lines, curves on the  
Blue air.

iv  
A touch is a conception.

—Janet McCann  
*College Station, Texas*



Dale Fleming

Illustration by Dale Fleming



## BLOOD, SWEAT, AND SOUR CHERRIES

by  
Pat Wangerin

Humility is a character trait I learned growing up on a farm in Michigan with eight brothers and sisters. We did not receive an allowance; therefore if we wanted to buy something, it was necessary to earn the money from an outside source.

The earliest job I remember was picking sour cherries. Cherries ripened around the middle of July. Before then, my mother had arranged the services of all her children with a local fruit farmer. We all knew what lay ahead of us and dreaded the phone call, "We will start picking on Monday."

The first day on the job wasn't too bad as we were "fresh" and met the challenge with cautious enthusiasm. We were already anticipating how much money we'd make and what we could buy. My mother would drive us to the orchard by 8:00 a.m. We'd carry a thermos of ice water and a transistor radio. Our two favorite stations were WOKY from Milwaukee, or WLS out of Chicago. Each of us chose a wooden ladder suitable to our height, which we would unofficially claim as our own the entire season. These ladders were designed to open wide to negotiate branches and tree trunks but were also prone to collapse if not set up properly.

My youngest sisters would be assigned to pick "bottoms," meaning they only picked cherries they could reach standing on the ground. We older kids would use the ladders to pick "tops," moving systematically around the tree. The worst part was climbing the middle of the tree to pick every last cherry. Sometimes the tree trunk was surrounded by wild berry bushes with thorns. The safest way to reach these trees was via the ladder to a branch and back to the ladder.

The farmer provided us with special aluminum buckets which had a small "O" ring on each side. The bucket was crescent-shaped and would lie comfortably across our abdomens. It was held in place with a woven adjustable

strap that crossed in a "X" on our backs. This way, the cherries rolled easily off the branches into our waiting buckets.

On a good day in my teenage prime, I could fill a "lug" an hour. A lug was a rectangular wooden box, sometimes with a piece of wood dividing it in half. It was equivalent to about half a bushel. We were paid fifty cents a lug, so for eight hours of work, I was paid four dollars.

The worst possible thing that could happen to a cherry picker would be to accidentally tip the bucket, spilling the cherries into the dirt. It was humiliating to have to pick them up off the ground after you'd already picked them off the tree. The cherries would be covered with sand, so we'd put them in the bottom of the lug and cover them with clean cherries. It just looked better that way.

Our lugs would be tagged with reusable cardboard tickets made from cereal boxes. You could tell what kind of cereal the farmer's family ate by looking on the back side. They were cut in strips 1" X 6" with our last name "Mills" written in black marker. We'd slide a tag along the side corner and stack the filled lugs at the end of a row of trees. We always used the north side in an attempt to keep them shaded from the sun.

The farmer would collect the tags when the lugs were picked up and taken to the cannery. He would count them, credit our family with that amount, and return them to us the next day. Each night we'd tell Mom how many lugs each of us picked, and she'd keep a running tab. When the farmer paid us at the end of the season, she'd see to it that we each received the correct amount of money.

By noon we were hot, tired, and dirty. We'd find a big shaded tree and wait for Mom to bring lunch. It was usually sandwiches, cookies, chips, and a termos of Kool-Aid. That's what we



really needed—a glucose fix. The younger girls would go home with Mom, having fulfilled their obligation, usually one lug. The rest of us always wished we could go home with them.

By afternoon with the sun high in the sky, we were hot. The heat would radiate off the sand, burning our feet. The water from the morning no longer had ice cubes in it, but it was wet and tasted good.

If we managed to keep ourselves hydrated, the inevitable would happen—we'd have to go to the bathroom. Every orchard had a privy used only during the picking season. It was usually a two seater, but I never let anyone in with me. There was never a light, so I couldn't see well, which was probably for the best. There were always dozens of flies inside, and I imagined spiders and snakes in the pit. I always held my breath and would pee as fast as I could. Sometimes, if no one was watching me, I would duck into the woods and relieve myself behind a tree. Ideally, a corn field gave the best coverage and provided an ample supply of toilet paper.

The season lasted until all the cherries were picked, usually two weeks. Toward the end, we'd all despise cherries, vowing never to eat

them in our lifetimes. The combination of heat, boredom, and the hopelessness of our situation sometimes overcame us. It would bring forth a stress-releasing phenomenon called "cherry fights." It often started out harmlessly with one stray cherry hitting an unsuspecting picker only to be returned to the original source with a few additional cherries. Eventually, everyone was involved, and there were cherries flying in all directions. It was a dilemma deciding whether to throw away these things you'd just picked, but a few could always be spared. It was of utmost importance not to let the fruit farmer catch you in this form of entertainment. He didn't look at the situation in the same way we did.

By 4:00 p.m. we'd finish filling our lugs, helping each other, as we were not allowed to leave any partially filled. We'd find our shaded tree and wait for Mom to come back. I never could positively determine how we could get so dirty in eight hours. Our hands, arms, and faces were sticky. I guess the combination of cherry juice and sand caused the black rings to form on our forearms. Small twigs and leaves were stuck in our hair. Mom would drive us home in the back of a pick-up truck.

We'd change into our swimming suits, climb back into the truck, and she'd drive us to the local swimming hole. We'd run into the refreshing water to cool off and clean up. Once home, we all had voracious appetites and ate a hearty supper. Anyone who had fallen off a ladder, been "attacked" by a branch, or encountered any other unfortunate experience, licked their wounds. After a good night's sleep, the routine was repeated the following day.

Today, cherries are picked by machines called "cherry pickers," and people are no longer needed to pick them. In a way, I am glad, as it was a tedious, demeaning job. I do know that by spending those weeks each summer, I can appreciate hard work and low pay. It was a motivating factor to attend college and pursue a career. I decided back then I would not spend my life performing that type of work.

Oh, you are wondering what I bought with my money? I saved most of it for college, but I did buy a Schwinn bicycle and a new Zenith transistor radio. That radio was used in subsequent years, sitting in a cherry tree to help pass time as those red cherries rolled into my aluminum bucket.

*Pat Wangerin resides in Dyer, Indiana.*

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### Nighttime Part 3

I don't write in the daytime anymore,  
The truth blinds my eyes.

The words flow at night,  
guided by the green  
fluorescence of a digital clock.

Words, half in half out of shadow,  
Needing to be, but hiding like me.

Maybe some day I'll write in the light again;  
till then, I watch the numbers click and change,  
And I sleep in their light.

—Cathi Kadow  
*Tinley Park, Illinois*



# Hoosier Childhood



Illustration by Dale Fleming





*Relief detail at entrance to the  
Gene Stratton Porter Building  
Illustration by Mary Smith Chant*

## A TALE OF TWO SCHOOLS

by  
Pamela Hunter

I.

Unaware of the big, black spider dangling nearby, Little Miss Muffet stirs her cereal. And for this scenario, she'll never be aware of the spider because both of them are frozen in a ceramic tile decorating the hall of the Gene Stratton Porter building.

In relation to other structures on Purdue Calumet's campus, the Porter building is a little like a high-school Sigrid Stark winner attending the annual literary awards ceremony: deferential yet proud to be among university students. Completed in 1950, this elementary school building is an example of what a later Inter-Institutional Survey team referred to when it said, "Buildings constructed during the period since 1942 have been particularly well planned, built, and located."

As a matter of fact, the building borders on being architecturally boring with its functional exterior. Fortunately,

careful landscaping offers color and motion as a contrast to the buff brick. In the spring, a crabapple tree explodes with the news that foliage will be returning to the surrounding white oaks and black oaks. And leaves of a redbud benefit man and insect. Besides softening the glazed stretch of windows across Porter's facade, the leaves of this tree provide shelter for languid lightning bugs during long summer afternoons.

Jim Severa, Assistant for Facilities at Purdue, has his office in the Porter building. Though he never attended this school as a child, he did attend the Warren G. Harding Elementary School in Hessville. Along with Caldwell (1951) and Wilson (1948), Harding and Porter make up a "fleet of sister schools" built to accommodate the baby boom of World War II. Recalling his "golden-rule" days, Severa mentions the frequent tornado and air-raid drills that

forced students into the school basement. And he remembers that the basement's dark, close atmosphere invariably caused a pupil or two to lose their breakfast.

Now, an inspection of Porter's basement gives little indication of any past adolescent anxiety. Elsewhere, though, there are indications that the school was not built with adults in mind. Two examples—half-mast water fountains and toilets—probably irritate all grownups who use the building. But those decorative tiles, woven in among the plain yellow tiles in the hallways, attract everyone's attention. From sleek mountain lions and stylized water lilies to nursery-rhyme characters, these ceramic scenes provide a bit of whimsy for the more romantic-minded. And even the no-nonsense individual is challenged to forecast the salvage value of the tiles.



## II.

When the new brick Porter school opened, the old wooden school building to the east of it was not demolished. Erected in 1929 with a Wicker Avenue address, this old structure originally had a pleasant natural setting. In fact, the surrounding trees and wild flowers prompted the Board of Education to name the school in honor of Indiana's famous naturalist Gene Stratton Porter.

Now no longer used as a grammar school, the old building was utilized for Special Education Services. According to a pamphlet dated 1953, the Special Service School was a "combination of a public school plus a therapy center" for the physically—not mentally—handicapped children of Hammond.

One such student, David B. Legg, shares the experiences he had during his attendance at this school in the 1960's. Born in 1955, Legg suffers from cerebral palsy. Because part of his cerebellum is dead, he says, "my arm/hand coordination, speech, and walking balance motions do not function properly." Legg gives this additional information about his school:

Mrs. Frances Goltart, who had a physically handicapped son, founded Porter Special Service School because there were no other schools in the Calumet Region to educate disabled children. Porter Special Service School educated children until it was demolished in order to make way for a parking lot for Purdue University Calumet in 1973.

After the Inter-Institutional team surveyed the school buildings of Hammond in 1962, it reported that Porter's wooden structure—like that of many of the portables in the city—"creates a fire hazard and is extremely undesirable, especially for the students it serves." Asked if he or his parents knew of this survey, Legg replies:

Neither I nor my folks know anything about the 1962 report that Porter was a fire trap. The walls were made of very soft fiber board and were extremely thin, and the students would make holes in the walls when they fell against them. There were monthly fire drills no matter how cold the weather.

The eight-room Porter Special Service School is remembered by Legg as having "an old time, one-room school house atmosphere with several grade levels in a single room instructed by one teacher." Actually, there were several teachers and therapists working

with these special children. That a good rapport existed between the staff and the students is evident from the following details supplied by Legg:

Miss Bay was a kindergarten and first grade teacher who let us be creative by permitting us to draw, paint, and learn the alphabet. I remember telling my mom, 'I went to school one whole week and I did not learn to read!' Mrs. Woody taught second and third grades, and it was she who started my interest in science and particularly astronomy with demonstrations using a model planetarium.



David B. Legg  
1967-1968 School Year

Mr. Pfeifer had just graduated from teachers' college when he arrived at Porter Special Service School. Teaching the fourth grade, Mr. Pfeifer was truly interested in his students. He even visited each of our homes. Mrs. Beckett was my favorite teacher and started my life-long interest in creative writing, which still flows today. Mrs. Beckett's love of nature spread to us with walks through the woods behind Porter Special Service School. Miss Franks was the physical therapist whose job was to help us exercise our bodies. Without Mrs. Dankenbring, an occupational therapist who started me typing, I could never have gone to high school and college, which demand lots of written work.

Mr. Daum taught seventh and eighth grade social studies and science and always was full of teasing and jokes. We were interested in Mr. Daum's World War II experiences during his term as a prisoner in a Nazi camp. Miss Hoover was an occupational therapist and a kindergarten teacher who also served as temporary principal. She taught me how to spell my name with cloth blocks on a felt board because I could not write by hand. I was first introduced to Purdue University Calumet by Miss Hoover, who pushed me in my wheelchair to an iron-work statue behind the Gyte Building.

According to Legg, the physical therapy room contained a climbing ladder, parallel bars for nonambulatory students, exercise tables, and mats for tumbling. In addition to the physical therapist and the occupational therapists, there was a speech therapist who helped the students with their breathing patterns and articulation, making "the speech exercises seem like fun games."

Though the Porter Special Service School fostered a warm, productive relationship between faculty and pupils, Legg says that the handicapped children didn't come into much contact with children attending Porter Elementary School. Parents provided transportation for their handicapped children. And once these children were at school, their lunch and play periods didn't coincide with those of the other students. Occasionally, both groups would see a play together. However, the handicapped children sat at the back of the auditorium. Halloween was another time when all the pupils interacted. Then, the Porter Elementary students paraded through the portable building in their fancy costumes.

At their own Halloween party, Legg and his classmates "bobbed for apples, ate candy made from the school's crab-apple trees, and drank cider." Also, Legg describes celebrating other special days:

At Christmas, we put on plays for our parents with seemingly endless rehearsals and line memorization. Our mothers would sew costumes for kids to wear during the plays. Earth Day 1970 was held during my final semester at Porter Special Service School. Mrs. Beckett gave each of her students a trash bag in order to pick up leaves and other rubbish. My love for nature and concern for the environment stems from Mrs. Beckett.

Legg's enthusiasm for this part of his growing up is apparent in his comments. And when asked just how successful the Porter Special Service School was, he concludes that all five students in his class "graduated to Morton High in 1970. We were all well educated at Porter."

Today, nothing tangible remains of that wooden structure in which David Legg's primary education left such a permanent impression upon him. He can't take his wheelchair back to the building where parallel bars once challenged his endurance, where cloth alphabet blocks once enabled him to spell.

Gone, too, are most of the wild flowers that once graced the school yard. Now, only in imagination can one visualize colorful marigolds, columbines and gentians. But wild violets still grow in the area. They've endured—warm with sun like special school memories.

*Pamela Hunter resides in Hammond, Indiana.*



for Ryan White

you were only thirteen,  
a boy given to bicycles  
and sodas,  
when it came upon you

it was ugly,  
it was very unpleasant,  
it was an infection in us  
that you helped to cure

far worse than virus,  
far worse than broken cells,  
it was prehistoric  
unreasoning dread,  
it was intolerance

with a courage  
born of compassion,  
you spoke to our hearts  
and you made our blood pure, Ryan,  
and you made our blood whole



*Photo by Dennis Hunter*

—Charles B. Tinkham  
*Hammond, Indiana*



Artwork by 6th grade student  
attending Hammond's Washington School in 1912



Courtesy of Hammond School City  
Memorabilia Center

## GROWING UP IN INDIANA

by

Lenora Ruch Roberts

At the county seat of Carroll County, Delphi, Indiana, near the old Wabash Canal, is a jewel of a courthouse with a beautiful rotunda. Housed in the courthouse is a small museum, nurtured by Phyllis Moore, who started the museum in a remote upper level of the building. Months and months later, in 1973, the basement ground level was given over to the museum.

There is our blue Prairie Schooner. In 1853-1854, the Peter Ruch family made the sojourn to Indiana from Lehigh County, Pennsylvania via Ft. Wayne and on to Clinton County, Indiana. As I touch the money box on the side of the Prairie Schooner with its hand-wrought nails and hinges, images of ages past run through my mind. The schooner was housed in our native walnut timbered red bank barn all of my life until the 1970's, when the schooner was taken to the museum.

The farm where the Ruchs settled, and where I was born, brings back more hours of wonderful memories than I can express. What a vast intangible wealth!

There is the beautiful little country church on the knoll a few miles from the farm. It is now struggling to be viable. My 85-year-old mother taught

Sunday school there until she was 80. The cemetery is filled with family, friends and people whose names were heard in stories long ago.

Threshing time was to be a nearly festive occasion to take away some of the pain from the hard work. The neighbors formed a company to buy the steam engine and separator to harvest oats and wheat. It was necessary to have a water tank on a wagon, hay wagons and a truck or two to take the grain to the town elevator if there was more grain harvested than needed to be stored in the barn bins.

My grandpa was the engineer, and many an hour I sat with him on a hot July day as he coal-fired the engine and kept it going so the belt would move to separate the grain. The new haystack was a special, sweet-smelling addition to the barn lot.

Some years I was water girl, carrying stone jugs of water to the workers. Oh, how the wheat stubble could cut your legs if your socks were not high enough on your legs. Of course, we wore overalls; "Billys" we called them.

Back at the house the tables were laden with good food. The tables were covered with the best white linen and the best china. (No electricity, no refrig-

eration, wood cook stoves and kerosene stoves.) The noodles were homemade. Often the egg bag with the graduated egg yolks from regular size to pea size were put in with the noodles and chicken. Many kinds of homemade pies and cakes were made.

The lemonade and the iced tea were made in 10-gallon crocks. Blocks of ice were used and the sugar wasn't spared. Those drinks were the best ever. Our farm had extremely pure, clean, cold water. (Today it is ruined by a city dump on a hill a mile away).

After harvest season was over, there was a "Settling Up" meeting. Coffee, pies and cakes were served.

I still keep one of the record books that shows how many bushels of each grain were harvested at each farm. The records were meticulously kept.

Each year the equipment was stored for another season until the year the combine came to the community.

The Prairie Schooner is out of the barn, there hasn't been a haystack there in years, and now the beautiful barn is just about a memory.

No matter how much money was kept in the Prairie Schooner box, my wealth of memories of life on the farm is priceless.

*Lenora Ruch Roberts resides in Munster, Indiana.*



Grant Park, Chicago

Photo by James L. Madison



## City Instruments

Walking down the street one day  
It sounded like instruments  
As they started to play.

Hundreds of sounds  
All different in tune,  
Beep! Honk! Voom! Voom!

People and cars parade the street,  
Each of them keeping  
Its very own beat.

It soon is quite loud;  
Angry like lightning.  
(I'm sure for some  
This noise could be frightening.)

But as for me, I see it my own way,  
The sounds dance and jump; they run  
and play.

I wish for a moment I could stand in  
the street  
And tap my foot to Chicago's beat.

But I'm too caught up  
Going about my own way.

Still the city's instruments  
Continue to play!

—Dana Jones, age 13  
*Kahler Middle School  
Dyer, Indiana*

## Chicago 1963: By tall buildings

When I was five  
my grandmother held my hand  
by tall buildings.  
She took one step;  
I, two.  
While she looked at mannequins  
in storefront windows,  
I stared at a legless man  
propped against the granite.  
He, catching me looking,  
flashed his gold-tooth smile.  
After sucking a chord  
on his harmonica  
he said, "Experience the Blues  
for fifty cents."  
She, yanking my arm,  
pulled me close.

—B. David Kinne  
*Crown Point, Indiana*

## Chicago

Tall buildings scrape the sky,  
Taxis and busses rush down the street.  
There is the clip-clop of horses prancing past,  
The whooshing of the revolving doors.  
People hurry to their jobs.  
We laugh about the cute guy in Banana Republic.  
There are police car sirens.  
Planes cut through the cold air.  
The sound of a skinny Santa ringing his bell and the  
growl of the subway mix.  
We walk down the street chattering about Christmas and  
laughing, pointing, sharing, growing close like one  
big family.

—Nikki Kraft, age 13  
*Kahler Middle School  
Dyer, Indiana*

## THE BICYCLE

by  
Susan Bortell

Memories are much like flowers. Some are lovely, staying in your heart to bring you pleasure forever. Others, lifeless and forlorn, are a lasting reminder that things are never as you'd like them to be.

In the mid-60's, medical assistants working in doctors' offices and hospitals wore white uniforms just as the nurses did. Many patients assumed we were nurses. Duties such as giving injections, doing blood pressure readings, and even assisting in the emergency room were given to MA's rather than putting the extra load on the already overworked nursing staff.

As an MA in a northern Indiana hospital, I worked many long evenings and weekend hours. One Sunday afternoon during the usual rush, as was the norm, we were overcrowded. Some patients who arrived on Sunday weren't really emergency cases, just those who hadn't bothered to deal with their sore throats, colds, and flu symptoms during the week. They had these problems treated on weekends as they didn't have anything else to do; they assumed we didn't either.

As I was hurrying to clean a messy exam table so the doctor on call could see the next patient, a mother and a small child entered the room. The little boy was bleeding from a large, deep laceration on his upper arm.

"He fell off his bike and cut himself," the mother told me without much worry or emotion. "He's gotta have somethin' done—maybe some stitches."

"Poor kid has such a pitiful little face," I thought to myself as I motioned for his mother to bring him in. I lifted him onto the exam table.

Because you see so much pain when you work in an ER, you tend to become very matter-of-fact. Not uncaring, just matter-of-fact. I looked at the child again. His soft brown eyes were ready

to spill over with tears, but he was silent. Hoping to ease his fear, I tried to start a conversation.

"Well, guy, how in the world did you fall off your bicycle? I'm sure you're a good rider. Must have been something in your way, right?" I tried to sound light.

There was no reply from the child, but his mother was quick to point out that he always had accidents. "Clumsy . . . he's allase hurtin' hisself," she said as she turned to leave the room.

Another thought crossed my mind, though not a kind one. I wondered to myself why this woman didn't choose to stay with her son to comfort him. As I watched her, she leaned against the hallway wall and lit a cigarette, blowing smoke at the ceiling. She looked bored with the whole thing.

My attention was turned back to the little boy. "What's your name, honey?" I asked him.

"Orin," was the only reply.

I started to scrub the wound, trying not to hurt him any more than was necessary. The gash was deeper than I had first imagined. As I scrubbed, the bleeding began again. Still no sound from Orin. What could be going on inside his head? Surely the child was feeling pain, yet he never made a sound.

Once again I tried to start a dialog with him. "Orin, I'm sorry if this is hurting you. I have to do it to make sure we get all the dirt out so you don't get an infection. You understand, don't you honey?"

"Yes," was his soft reply.

"The doctor will be here in a few minutes," I said, "and we're going to get you all fixed up." He just looked away. After scrubbing, I could then see the clean area of soft skin that surrounded the wound. The laceration was not jagged or torn, and there were no scratches or bruises on Orin's skin. A fall from a bicycle would have resulted

in an injury that looked much different than this one.

Something was very wrong. I had dealt with enough screaming, terrified children to know that. Usually it took another staff member to help me prep a little child with a laceration as bad as this one. Orin just laid very still on the table and would not look at me. Maybe he was just a tough cookie; some kids tolerated pain better than others.

Cautiously, I tried another approach as I got the suture tray ready. "What kind of bike do you have, Orin? Tell me what color it is." Still no reply.

Doctor Stewart was working that night; when he walked in the door, I pulled him aside to explain the situation.

"This kid won't talk," I said, "Doctor, please, tell me how you think Orin really got that laceration. It looks too clean to have been caused by a fall from a bike. There are a few pieces missing here. I can't get anything out of him."

"Maybe he just doesn't like you," Stewart shot back with a quiet chuckle as he walked over to the table and started to talk to Orin. The boy answered questions with just a nod of his head. As I took my place at the table to assist the doctor, I looked down at Orin's dirty little face. It was the face of a little, scared child. I smiled at him. He showed no response, but as the doctor inspected the wound, Orin reached out and took my hand. No words, just his little hand on mine. I closed my fingers around his and with my other hand brushed the hair off his forehead.

The doctor explained to Orin that he would have to give him a shot to numb the pain before he could suture the wound.

Again Orin did not reply. Twenty minutes of work and nine sutures were required to close the slash in Orin's arm. He never made a sound during the





Photo by James L. Madison

whole ordeal. He just held my hand. He blinked his eyes once because of the pain, but he never cried—he just stared at the overhead light.

When Doctor Stewart was finished, he shot me one of his famous “stay out of this” looks as he walked out of the room to talk to Orin’s mother. I started to apply the dressing. Now Orin was looking at me.

“Well, champ, you sure were brave. You’ve got to promise me that you’ll be more careful on your bike, okay?” I asked as he watched me. Getting no response, I went on. “Bicycles are wonderful things to have, but you can sure get hurt, can’t you?” I said as I was applying the tape. I didn’t want to push, but I just had to get through to this child; this just wasn’t normal. “Are you sure you fell off your bike? You didn’t hurt yourself some other way, did you, honey?”

He sat up on the table, still not answering me. Without thinking, I

leaned down and hugged him. His frail little body stiffened. Chiding myself for what I thought was a case of bad timing, I told him that I’d see him again in a week when his mother brought him back to have the sutures removed. He almost smiled. My back was turned as he spoke.

“Hey, Nursie.”

“I turned to face him. “What, Orin?”

“Nursie—I don’t got no bicycle,” he spoke with calm resignation.

I choked back the feeling that was churning within me, but before I could reply, Orin’s mother had entered the room. He fell silent once again. She took her copy of the ER form without saying anything and moved toward the door. Orin got off the table and followed her, not looking back. She never once touched him or asked him how he felt; she walked ahead of him as they left.

As I stood at the back door and watched them leave, tears stung my

eyes. “That poor baby,” I thought. I was trying to ease my own pain by assuring myself that I’d see him in a week. They walked, she and the child, through the parking lot, the mother lighting another cigarette while Orin walked slowly behind her.

“Yes, it will only be seven days and I can see him again. I can check on him to make sure he’s all right,” I thought to myself. “He’ll be okay, I know he will.” My heart ached as I thought of the life that little boy must have had. Maybe when he came back I could get him to talk to me a little more. Maybe I’d be able to find out what really happened. Maybe there would be some extra money to get him a bicycle, a real bike of his own. Maybe he’d have something to smile about after all. Maybe, maybe, maybe.

I never saw Orin again.

*Susan Bortell resides in  
Michigan City, Indiana.*



## Memories of Cedar Lake

My childhood days at Cedar Lake  
Were rich with rustic charm;  
Days when we bought milk and eggs  
From our neighbor at the farm.

The General Store supplied the rest  
As best I can recall,  
But now we're looking forward to  
Our brand new shopping mall.

Yes, there have been many changes;  
The railroad left the shore  
And the cry of "boatrides 'round the lake"  
Will echo never more.

But the crappies still bite early  
At the south end of the lake  
And the truant voice of springtime croons,  
"You need a fishing break."

The gusty winds that fill a sail  
Still set the winner's pace  
Just the way they always did  
On a Sunday's sailboat race.

And I can see a rainbow  
On a cloudless summer day  
As a slalom skier rounds a buoy  
And the sunlight meets the spray.

Growing up in Cedar Lake  
Was being heaven blessed  
And there's something so eternal  
In all we loved the best.

I have watched the moonlight magic  
On a quiet summer night  
As its pathway 'cross the water  
Changed from gold to silver white.

The oaks that frame the distant shore  
Stand brilliant in the fall;  
They promise pure enchantment  
To the ducks that come to call.

Skating parties on the lake  
With ice so firm and clear—  
Let's plan to do it all again  
At Christmas time this year.

If I should journey far away  
Down life's alluring track,  
The things I see in memory  
Will always bring me back.

—Dick G. Norris  
*Cedar Lake, Indiana*

## The '30's: East Chicago, Indiana

John Dillinger robbed the First National Bank  
one day, lending glamor  
to our gutsy hub of steel and oil.

Only a child-person knew it as enchanted—  
orange train  
running through the main street,  
headed for Chicago—  
grey days a foghorn from the canal  
bellowing camaraderie—  
Bank Night at the movies, with five hundred dollars going  
to fat sixth-grader Danny—  
little Old-World daughters  
in tiny earrings  
and too-long dresses  
jumping rope on the playground—  
harbinger of summer,  
the knife-sharpener's pushcart  
with its dinging bell—  
collie's noontime trip  
to the railroad-crossing man  
with his brown bag lunch—  
Miss Davis, librarian,  
with twelve silver bracelets on her arms,  
yelling "Hello, Cookie!" at each child—  
and diamond-sparkles  
in the downtown sidewalks—  
J.D., did you notice?

—Dona Lu Goldman  
*Hammond, Indiana*



through Indiana autumn  
we gathered  
handfuls of fat acorns,  
the gold of maple leaves,  
the roadside blue  
of chicory,  
the little thunder  
of the ground squirrel  
darting  
lightning-quick  
across the brittleness  
of leaves

through Indiana summer  
we gathered  
a smooth green flight  
of grasshoppers,  
a lull  
of cricket call,  
a twilight  
of hummingbird  
and primrose,  
an orange cathedral moon  
descending  
to a far blue distance  
hills

time  
in Indiana  
was a slow  
green day  
of child wonder

—Charles B. Tinkham  
Hammond, Indiana





## MRS. PANELLKA'S

by

Connie Sowa Jamrok

Highland, Indiana

Two weeks before our vacation at Shafer Lake, Mom would take Polly and me shopping for vacation clothes. We'd scour downtown Hammond—Kresge's, Woolworth's—and a little shop down the block from us in East Chicago called Panellka's. Mrs. Panellka was a short, stout old lady who wore her hair in a tight brown bun at the nape of her neck. Her storefront window displayed floral housedresses and ruffled pastel housecoats pinned to the display wall with their arms spread out wide to the sides, as if they were startled to be given this place of honor; laying flat on the display window floor were gaudy print muu-muus, several pairs of clunky orthopaedic shoes, and rosaries—pink ones, black ones, and even some with clear crystal beads, top-of-the-line models.

When we enter the dark shop, a little bell rings, and Mrs. Panellka yells from a back room curtained off from the rest of the store: "Yeden minuta! Vayt a minute! I comink, I comink!" Mom smiles at us; Polly and I snicker. Mrs. Panellka is proud that she is bilingual and can help Polish-speaking and English-speaking customers "nyeh problem."

Mom heads toward the rack with men's clothes to pick out something for my dad. Dad never goes shopping. "That's what I have a wife for," he tells us when we ask if he's coming. Or else he says he doesn't have time. My mom never has the time either, but somehow she always gets stuck picking out his shirts, pants, underwear, even shoes, and then returning them if they don't fit right. Polly heads for the girls' clothes. I always like to look at the weird things in Mrs. Panellka's glass counter, which blocks the doorway to the back room. There's a comforting mixture of the religious, the patriotic, and the domestic: miniature posters of the Black Madonna, a famous portrait of Mary that got darkened by a Cathedral fire in

Poland eons ago, but miraculously survived; red and white flags with pictures of the Polish eagle on them; small pins of the Capitol building with "Washington D.C." written under them; skeins of colored yarn, spools of thread, knitting needles, needlepoint pillows, paper doilies, even a meat grinder with a manual crank—the kind my grandmother uses to make Polish sausage.

Mrs. Panellka waddles out from behind the curtain, wearing a peach housedress, the kind she has on display in the window. "Allo!" she greets us, obviously delighted that someone has entered her store. "Hello," Mom says, looking up briefly from the rack of men's clothes. Mrs. Panellka flashes us a beaming smile that shows off her

flawless dentures, then looks down, as pleased as can be. She makes herself busy behind the counter to let us know she's available if we have a question or need her help. She's careful not to stare or make us uncomfortable while we browse, but Mrs. Panellka loves having customers, and after a few minutes she can't help but start a conversation.

She comes over to me and reaches into the glass counter from the back and pulls out two medals. "I show you sometink nice," she says. She places them on the top of the counter. One has a metal bar with a pin on the back of it, and the words "Saint Maria Goretti" engraved on it. Under the bar hangs a blue ribbon with a diamond-shaped medal attached. The medal has



Illustration by William Meyer, Jr.



the figure of a woman etched in the center, with a halo around her head. I know all about Saint Maria Goretti from school. The nuns talk about her all the time. Every girl in the school automatically becomes a member of the Saint Maria Goretti Society when she reaches puberty, that is, when she reaches the sixth grade.

Maria Goretti was only sixteen and, according to the nuns, the purest virgin in all of Italy, a country teeming with virgins. One day she was making home-made pasta in the kitchen, humming an aria, when her cousin went berserk with sexual frustration ("what else could he do with all those virgins around?" my friend Wanda, who later became a nun, would say) and stormed into the kitchen to rape her. Maria Goretti fought the crazed brute off, saying she would rather die than let him soil her. So Luigi, or whatever his name was, picked up the butcher's knife that was lying on the kitchen table and stabbed her.

After the nuns would tell us how we should all follow the example of Maria Goretti—who died, true, but stayed pure and became a saint to boot—they would warn us of certain behaviors that might, unbeknownst to us, lead to trouble. The sex drives of boys, they cautioned, were uncontrollable, so we should do nothing to set them off. For example, we should never part our hair, because it meant we were "looking for boys." This always perplexed us, because the only way we could wear our hair without parting it was to back-comb it, or "tease" it as we used to say, and spray it until it could withstand a gale, but the nuns forbade us to do that. Every morning before school started, the nuns would sift their fingers through our hair, and if they found tangles (which they took to mean it was teased and sprayed) they stuck our heads under the bathroom sink and made us wash it out. This practice made for natural parts in our hair, which got us into trouble because that meant we were "looking for boys."

Another "no-no" that would make a boy wild with desire was to set a table with a white tablecloth. "Never have a boy over for dinner and set your table with a white cloth," the nuns would say. "It will remind him of sheets." Never mind that we were only twelve

and the only thing we could cook was Campbell's soup. This was information we were to store away for future use. After these talks, we would go back to our classroom and join the boys, who were probably being told equally strange things about us by the priests. We'd look at them suspiciously, as if they were walking time bombs, wondering with a mixture of terror and interest when they would go off.

One time, when our desks were pushed together in clusters of three, Sister Cassius put me, as one of the quietest girls in the class, in between two bullies, Stanley Patoski and Bruce Furman. Bruce had the shortest temper in the school. Talk about a walking time bomb. It happened that one day my stack of textbooks touched a millimeter of his desk, and with a sudden sweep of his arm he succeeded in spraying my books across the floor with a loud crash. I stood up screaming, sure that Bruce had finally lost all control and that I was going to be raped right there in front of the class. It took Sister a half hour to calm me down out in the hallway, and I would agree to go back into the classroom only if my seat were changed.

"You vant?" Mrs. Panellka holds up the medal to me. "Tirty cents."

"No, thanks," I say. "Not today."

She lays that one back on the counter, obviously disappointed, and picks up the other pin, a Bronze Pelican. It looks interesting. I squint down at it in her hand.

"You know dis?" she asks, pointing to it.

"It's a pelican," I say.

"Dat's right," she says, pleased.

"Pelukhins vunderful birds. When baybies are starfing—when no food—mother peluhkin rips open her breast," here Mrs. Panellka makes a slashing motion across her chest, "and lets baybies feed on her insides."

I stand looking at the medal, feeling a little sick.

"You vant?" she asks. "Fifty cents."

I shake my head no, and turn to join Polly at the dress rack. Polly wades through the circular rack of girls' clothes until she finds something she likes. "You okay?" she asks me. I stand behind her, watching. I probably look a little pale.

"I'm okay." I don't sound very con-

vincing, but Polly doesn't notice.

"Oh, look how cute!" Polly says. She holds something up by the hanger for me to see. "Mom!" she calls, holding the dress up over her head. Mom looks up from the other side of the store. The dress is a sleeveless dropped-waist shift, navy blue with large white polka dots the size of a half dollar above the waist and the reverse—white with navy blue polka dots—below the waist. "That's cute," Mom says, walking over to get a better look. Mrs. Panellka grins at us, happy that we found something we like in her store. Mom looks through the rack and finds an identical dress, only in red, in my size. Even though Polly and I are four years apart in age, Mom still dresses us up like twins. She has picked out a pair of pajamas for Dad, who always sleeps in boxer shorts except when he's on vacation. Mom decides she will not buy anything for herself today. She'll go to Lewin's, which is a better store, another day. Mrs. Panellka totals the bill, complimenting our purchases. "Taki wadna," she tells Mom as she bags the dresses. "Veddy nice," she says to Polly and me, handing us the bag. She reaches over to give us both a quick tweak on the cheeks. "Such goodt girls." Polly and I make such awful faces that Mom laughs out loud and waves good-bye as we head out the door.

When we get home and hang up our dresses in our bedroom, I find the St. Maria Goretti Society medal Mrs. Panellka has thrown in the bag for me. I don't want it, but I'm too superstitious to throw it away. I consider giving it to Polly, but remember one of Mom's more irritating sayings, "Give away a gift—bad luck for the rest of your life." Reluctantly, I hide it in the bottom drawer of my jewelry box under my charm bracelet, resentful that I am stuck with the Patron Saint of Virgins until I can figure out a way to get rid of her without dooming myself to a life of bad luck.

I remember staring at that small jewelry box a long, long time, wondering how many more medals, medallions, statues, and icons I would be able to hide in it. It was as though, even at that young age, I knew my life would be filled with such clumsy and only half successful attempts to rid myself of other people's notions of morality.

## Hawk-Billed Knife

We had driven all morning on the back roads,  
my father and I, into those dense green hills,  
all the way just to fix a leak on the roof  
of the old lodge hall—the patched-up building  
where the artist kept a studio during the war,  
where his widow still came to stay each summer  
till Labor Day, sleeping on a cot in the back room,  
heating cans of soup on a single hotplate,  
selling a pastel now and then to a passerby.

It would be my grandmother's annual visit  
to see her only sister-in-law, the two of them  
entirely unlike—one from a small town,  
the other from the city—but cordial, since  
both had known the same man, both lived with him  
for a few years, one early in life, one late.  
She would be with us in the cab of the pickup,  
dozing in the heat, leaning forward, catching  
herself, peering out at the unfamiliar hills.

The old building—two stories, square-fronted,  
white clapboard with an elaborate cornice—  
faced east across a broad lawn always dusky  
in the shade of great towering, arching elms.  
Along the stones of the foundation, on steps  
leading to the front door, in the rare cool  
of high summer, a brindled tomcat belonging  
to one of the neighbors would be stretched out,  
too drowsy to slink away when we pulled up.

A cast-iron pump stood anchored in a square  
of limestone in the yard. We leaned to wash  
our hands and faces, then took the tin cup  
and drank. Aunt Carolyn would be talking  
to Effie, then to my father, telling him  
about the leak, how the man who tended the yard  
was not to be trusted. I worked the handle  
and watched water cascading over the stone,  
glistening and disappearing in the grass.

The two of them set out tea in a room filled  
with unframed paintings and relics of Paris.  
My father brought the bucket of pitch; I lugged  
the roll of tarpaper. Upstairs, we followed  
the hall to the roof ladder. I went first,  
feeling ahead in the gloom, the thick heat,  
reaching to push against the rough boards  
until the hatch gave way. Fresh air swirled  
all around me as I struggled into the light.  
We were there, in the stillness, high above  
everything else in town, looking out and down  
through a pale scrim of leaves—at the roof  
of the Baptist Church, the library on the corner,  
the barbershop in the red-brick building,  
the cars parked along the courthouse square.  
I gazed out at the hills surrounding the town  
while my father took a jackknife and probed  
to find the roof's bad places. He scraped  
at beads of tar, and whistled at the damage.



He sat back on his heels. Then he called to me,  
fished around for a dollar bill, and explained  
he wanted me to go down to the hardware store  
on the main street, and tell the old man there  
I needed to buy "a hawk-billed knife." Years later  
I would learn it was simply a roofer's knife  
with a short curved blade, but then I had only  
the strange name he had given me, and the dollar  
clutched in my hand as I climbed down the ladder.

Since then, too, I have seen that kind of knife  
sharpened and resharpened again and again  
by roofers, by those who work high in the air  
with hot pitch, with the steamy black smell  
of tar rising all around them, the ropes caked  
and stiff, everything sticky to the touch—  
I have seen such knives filed to the nub,  
handles wound with tape, hawk-bills worn flat,  
seen them thrown away, useless, in the street.

And could I have looked out far enough over  
those quiet houses, beyond those green hills,  
I might have seen how everything in the town  
would be worn away too, would pour glistening  
over the smooth ledge of time—the elm trees  
burnished by the wind, the huge dim interior  
of that building, the two old ladies talking,  
the cat on the doorstep—all that would dwindle  
and fade, as though falling down a deep chasm.

Part of me did know: had glimpsed, in drawings  
thumbtacked to the walls of the meeting room  
on the second floor, scenes of a vanished world:  
lacking the money for canvas, for oil paints,  
how many times had he gone out to sketch  
young girls at their sewing machines, old men  
trundling carts, sidewalks crowded with menders,  
fixers, buyers hurrying along and yet caught,  
saved for an instant, by his smooth-flowing hand?

What held them up could yet hold me. August,  
nineteen forty-eight: I was nine years old.  
My father had given me a dollar to spend  
and waited for me to return. I came out  
onto the walk, under the canopy of trees,  
sunlight dappling the grass, cicadas pulsing  
all around me. At the pump I filled the cup  
to overflowing, drank its coldness, then walked  
on toward the square, to buy a hawk-billed knife.

—Jared Carter  
*Indianapolis, Indiana*

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## NIGHT IN THE HIGH FIELD

by  
Lee Ebler

One night when I was six, we went walking, my grandfather and I . . . up to the High Field beyond the farmhouse.

We went walking because the day had been hot, and the hotness still lingered in the corners of the house; and walking put off going to sleep in the hotness.

"I won't come this time," said Grandma, who had a glass of iced tea and her palm fan from Alexander's Funeral Home. "But bring me back something pretty."

"We'll bring you moonlight," Grandpa said. He smiled at her and winked at me.

Grandpa had brought back remarkable things from his walks, but he'd never before promised moonlight. I was a little anxious for him.

So Grandpa and I went walking. We followed the tractor lane till it became a cow path, and then we followed the cow path along the rim of the ravine where the shadows were severe and the mists lingered longest.

I held Grandpa's hand tightly, and it was rough and calloused and very reassuring.

"You're not afraid, are you?" asked Grandpa. "You've been this way a hundred times."

"But not at night, Grandpa."

And Grandpa made a little noise to show he understood.

We left the ravine behind and climbed the hill. The cow path was hard packed and smooth and as predictable as the cows themselves. And as we climbed, the moon sailed out from a tower of clouds and silvered the tips of the grasses. Somewhere, far, far away, an owl called. The sound was so lost in the wideness of sky and earth

that it made me want to cry, and yet it made me happy to think of the owl on some secret errand of its own.

"Here we are," said Grandpa, and we gained the top of the hill and walked out into the coolness of the High Field.

There had been wheat in the High Field in June—a golden, swaying, fence-locked sea that turned into running waves when the wind was at it. But now there were soy beans . . . prim rows of green in daylight, but at night dappled patches of grey and silver, all carelessly muddled together as if the moonlight had melted them.

"It's cool now," said Grandpa with satisfaction, and then he pointed back toward the farmhouse where the window light wavered through the maples.

"Is Grandma still sitting with her fan and tea?" I asked.

And Grandpa said he thought she probably was.

Just thinking of Grandma made me want to see her, to touch her hand, to make sure she was there . . . for the world seemed suddenly big and empty; and the house was an island with its heart showing through a square of yellow window light.

"The day-time boundaries are gone at night," said Grandpa as if guessing my thoughts.

I looked about at the fence—the good, sturdy fence that kept the horses from foundering on the crops—and saw the moonlight had written post-shadows on the ground like a crazy alphabet. Even the friendly woods that edged the field was only a dusky smudge. For a moment the moonlight dimmed, and in the darkness seemed to take away my balance.

Then Grandpa began to talk. He told me field-mysteries: where the red fox hid her kits and the bobwhite its nests. He talked of trees and seasons and weeds that were more lovely than flowers.

We stood close together, breathing sweet air that had only a few hours earlier burnt our lungs. Around us were the night-sounds, cricket and frogs and strange rustlings in the grasses.

I forgot to be afraid.

"I like the High Field at night," I said, and then I yawned and wondered if Grandma had turned back my covers.

"You can touch the stars up here," Grandpa said, and picked me up. "You can feel the world turn."

He began to walk down toward the light in the trees, and the rhythm of his steps was a kind of lullaby.

"We forgot the moonlight for Grandma," I said sleepily. "She should have moonlight with her fan and tea."

"So she should," said Grandpa, and he stopped below the ravine where the brambles grew.

"Here's moonlight for your grandma," he said, and broke off a piece of bramble that held four-petaled flowers. "White bramble roses for Grandma, born out of season and blooming at night when they shouldn't. They must be made from moonlight, don't you think?"

I said that sounded reasonable to me.

I fell asleep before we reached the farmhouse, and someone put me to bed and pulled a coverlet over my feet. But when I woke up in the darkness, sitting beside my bed in a water-filled mason jar was the bramble made of moonlight.

And that was a kind of promise.

*Lee Ebler resides in Merrillville, Indiana.*

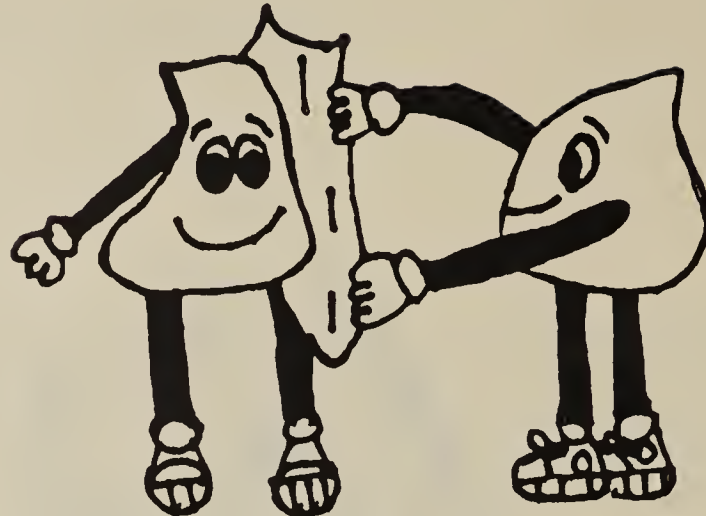


# Writing By & For Children



Illustration by Dale Fleming

## THE HISTORY OF THE CHOCOLATE KISS



Mr. Gleeman was the best chocolate maker in the world. People came from miles around to buy his chocolate although, no matter how hard he tried, he never sold all of his candy. But the unbought candy didn't mind—in fact, they thought it was rather fun, because on Christmas Eve the unbought candy came to life.

On Christmas Eve, Mr. Gleeman closed up his shop when it was already dark because he had so many customers. He was in such a hurry that he forgot to extinguish the fire in his fireplace. As soon as Mr. Gleeman was out of sight, the unbought candy came to life. The chocolate balls were the most active because they bounced, rolled, and jumped. The chocolates kept up with their games. They ran, jumped, and played leap frog. The room was quite warm, and the chocolate balls started to get soft. The more they jumped, the more triangular-shaped they became.



Before they realized it, they had changed from balls to triangular kisses. Some of the balls started crying because they could no longer bounce or roll, and others were afraid their magical power would be discovered because of their new shape. They began to think...how could they disguise themselves so their powers wouldn't be discovered? Some of the chocolates found a way to roll themselves back into chocolate balls and they jumped back into their jars. However, some of the kisses liked their new shape. One said, "Why don't we disguise ourselves with brightly colored paper? That way, Mr. Gleeman will not notice that some of the balls are missing."

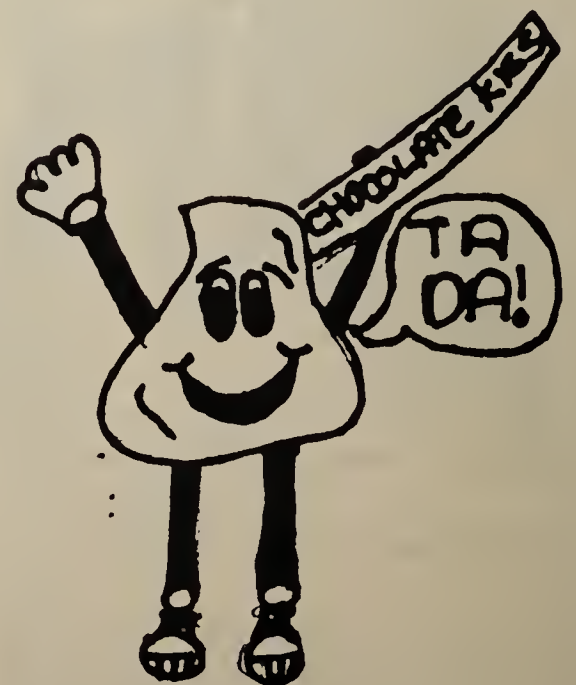
They found some scraps of wrapping paper on the floor that Mr. Gleeman had left when he wrapped Christmas presents. The kisses began wrapping each other up in the brightly colored paper. Then the chocolates jumped into an empty jar next to the chocolate balls. The day after Christmas, Mr. Gleeman came back to work. He thought his shop was messier than he remembered leaving it. He started wiping off the candy counter when he noticed that there were kisses in the jar next to the chocolate balls.

Mr. Gleeman was puzzled. He took out one of the candies and unwrapped it. "Who could have put these here?" wondered Mr. Gleeman. Just then, the chocolate stood up.

"Before you eat me," it replied, "let me explain. Every Christmas Eve after you leave, all the candies get the power to get up and play. We got so hot we melted and became kisses."

"Now I understand," Mr. Gleeman answered.

After revealing their secret to Mr. Gleeman, the chocolates lost their powers forever. However, the story does have a happy ending. Mr. Gleeman became famous for his chocolate kisses wrapped in brightly colored paper.



—Paul Whitener, Jr., Age 12  
Warren Elementary School  
Highland, Indiana



## Foolish Things

There are many foolish things.  
I've done quite a few.  
Like missing my bus,  
Or losing my shoe.

I fell down the stairs,  
And got hurt pretty bad.  
I bother my sister,  
Who gets really mad.

I've walked into walls.  
I've been lost in malls.  
I've taken some falls.

But somehow I managed,  
To survive this long.  
At least now I know,  
That doing foolish things,  
Isn't really wrong.

—Sara Johnsen, Age 11  
*Kahler Middle School  
Dyer, Indiana*

## Monster

I hear a noise, but when I look, it's gone.  
Sometimes I hear it 'til the break of dawn.  
When the lights go out, that's when he comes,  
And the closet door opens, with a quiet hum.  
Around the door is where he peeks,  
Until he sees that which he seeks.  
Then the noises start, soft and low,  
And the fear I feel, grows and grows.  
The footsteps stop in front of my bed.  
And I pull the covers over my head.  
But when I jump and turn on the light,  
The monster is gone, just out of sight.  
So, never do I get to see,  
The monster that is scaring me.

—Susannah Snyder, Age 15  
*Anchorage, Alaska*

## Life

When my ideas get shattered,  
Or they get thrown away,  
I always say, "There is always another day."  
Like when I wanted to be a swimmer,  
I also wanted to be a winner.  
I tried and failed by not being fast.  
I kept trying, but I still came in last.  
Then, after much practice, one day  
I helped my team to win a relay.  
I learned one cannot win at everything he does,  
But one gives it his best anyway—just because.  
Hear me when I say,  
"There is always another day."

—Tina Wietbrock, Age 12  
*Solon Robinson School  
Crown Point, Indiana*

That sound! Oh, no, that sound again!  
It makes me want to scream!  
The racket filters through my brain  
Just like an awful dream.

I struggle to compose myself  
And fight off the attack.  
Just when I think I've conquered it,  
The sound keeps coming back.

The newest wave storms in my ears  
And reaches for my brain.  
If I don't get away from it,  
I'll surely go insane.

I've only got one chance—if I  
could only reach... my arm...  
Hurrah! I've done it.  
Peace is mine: I've shut off my alarm!

—Jenn Setlak, Age 13  
*Kahler Middle School  
Dyer, Indiana*

## WHO NEEDS GLASSES?

by  
Hallie Parker

"I really must go shopping," said Mrs. Cobb. "Now, let me see. Where did I put my coat?" Mrs. Cobb could not see very well, so she did not know that her coat was on a nearby chair.

"Here is your coat," said Mr. Cobb, who was reading the morning newspaper. "If you had glasses, you could find your coat all by yourself."

"Who needs glasses?" asked Mrs. Cobb, as she put on her coat. "I can see very well. Glasses, indeed!"

"You could see much better with glasses," said Mr. Cobb.

"I can see as well as anyone," said Mrs. Cobb.

Mr. Cobb sighed and said nothing.

"My friends don't wear glasses. Glasses are ugly," said Mrs. Cobb, as she put a red shoe on her right foot and a blue shoe on her left foot.

Mr. Cobb said nothing.

"I think I'll wear my new hat," said Mrs. Cobb, but she put a lamp shade on her head by mistake. Then she opened a door.

Mr. Cobb looked up from his newspaper and smiled.

"Dear me," said Mrs. Cobb. "It's dreadfully dark outside."

"It is dark because you opened the wrong door," said Mr. Cobb. "You are in the closet."

"These doors all look alike," said Mrs. Cobb. She stepped out of the closet and opened another door. This time it was the right door. "I'll just walk to that nice store in the next block," she said.

But she didn't see the sidewalk. She walked into the middle of the street.

Then she began to walk down the street. Cars drove by on both sides. Drivers honked their horns and shouted.

When she reached the store, Mrs. Cobb took a shopping cart and began to put things into it.

"Let me see," she said. "I need cheese and bread." But she put soap flakes and napkins into the cart.

"Good morning, Mrs. Cobb," said Mrs. Lee, who was also shopping that

day. "How are you today?"

"I am fine, thank you," said Mrs. Cobb.

"Such a lovely day," said Mrs. Lee.

"Indeed," said Mrs. Cobb. "Now let me see. Perhaps some candy for the children. But she put mothballs into her cart.

The next day, Mrs. Cobb was up early.

"I have many things to do today," she said.

First she wrote a letter to her mother.

Next, she called the children.

"Time for school," she said.

"But it's still dark," cried the children.

"There is the sun," said Mrs. Cobb.

"That's the moon!" answered the children.

"Don't be silly," said Mrs. Cobb.

Mrs. Cobb went outdoors. She put the letter to her mother into a bird's nest near the mailbox. Then she started back to the house.

She bumped her nose on the garage. Then she bumped her nose on a tree.

"Who moved the house?" shouted Mrs. Cobb.

"Here is the house," called the children, and they helped Mrs. Cobb inside.

"Drink your milk," said Mrs. Cobb, but she gave each of them a tall glass of vinegar by mistake.

Soon Mr. Cobb went to work. The children went to school.

"Well," said Mrs. Cobb. "First I'll do the dishes." But she put the dishes into the clothes dryer.

"Now I'll clean the house," she said.

Mrs. Cobb washed the windows, but she used paint instead of soap. She polished the furniture, but she used shoe polish by mistake.

"Glasses, indeed!" she said, as she brushed a pillow and fluffed the dog. "I can see as well as anyone!"

Then she put the cat into the closet. She put her hat outdoors.

"Now where is my vacuum cleaner?" she asked. "Perhaps it is in the closet."

But Mrs. Cobb opened the wrong door.

"Dear me, such a noise!" she said, as she pushed the lawn mower across the rug.

When her chores were finished, Mrs. Cobb made a cake. She put salt and soap flakes into the bowl instead of flour and sugar. Then she put the cake into the dishwashing machine.

Later that day, Mrs. Cobb went to her mail box.

"Perhaps I have a letter," she said. But she put her hand into a hole in a tree and frightened a family of squirrels.

"No mail," said Mrs. Cobb. "Nothing at all." She started back to her house.

Mrs. Cobb walked and walked. At last she came to a door. She opened it and stepped inside.

"Dear me," she said. "That was a long walk."

"What are you doing in my house?" asked Mrs. Smith. "Did you come to visit?"

"Your house?" asked Mrs. Cobb. "But this is my house!"

"Your house is next door," said Mrs. Smith. "This is my house."

"Excuse me," said Mrs. Cobb.

"Perhaps you need glasses," said Mrs. Smith.

"Glasses?" shouted Mrs. Cobb. "Who needs glasses? I can see very well, very well!" And she hurried away.

Mrs. Cobb walked and walked. At last she came to another house and went inside. This time it was the right house.

Suddenly Mrs. Cobb heard a loud noise.

"Dear me," she said. "I'm sure that was thunder. It is going to rain."

The noise went on and on.

"It must be a terrible storm," said Mrs. Cobb. "I'll just look out the window and see for myself."

Mrs. Cobb hurried to the window, but she couldn't see the street-cleaning machine going by on the street outside.

"The children!" cried Mrs. Cobb. "I must go to the school and get the





Illustration by Max Buczynski, Age 9  
James W. Riley School, Hammond, Indiana

children. They will be cold and wet if they must walk in the storm. I'll just get my umbrella."

But Mrs. Cobb picked up the lamp instead of her umbrella. Then she hurried out of the house.

She walked and walked. At last she came to a garage.

"Here is the car," she said.

"Stop!" shouted Mrs. Smith, as Mrs. Cobb drove the car out of the garage.

"Perhaps Mrs. Smith is calling her cat," said Mrs. Cobb, as she drove the car into the street.

"Stop, thief!" shouted Mrs. Smith. "That's my car!"

"Dear me," said Mrs. Cobb. "Someone has taken Mrs. Smith's car. How dreadful!"

Mrs. Cobb drove away. She drove over lawns and flower beds, fences and garbage cans.

"This is a bumpy street," she said.

She drove through a tennis court, a department store, and Mrs. Lee's living room.

"Look out!" shouted Mrs. Lee.

"Call the police!" shouted the owner of the store.

"Stop!" shouted Mrs. Smith, who was riding her bicycle after Mrs. Cobb.

"Dear me," said Mrs. Cobb. "Everyone is so excited. Perhaps there is a circus in town."

Mrs. Cobb drove on and on. She drove through a pond and frightened the ducks. Then she drove through a restaurant, a library, and a laundromat.

"Dear me," she said, driving through a car wash. "It's raining! The children

will be waiting for me. I must hurry!"

She drove through a hardware store, a tennis court and a gas station. At last she came to the school.

"Here I am, children!" she called. But she picked up Mrs. Lee's children by mistake, and put them in the car.

"Help!" cried the children, as Mrs. Cobb drove away.

"Be quiet," said Mrs. Cobb. "It is hard to drive in the rain with such noisy children."

"Stop!" shouted a nurse, as Mrs. Cobb drove through a hospital.

"Stop!" shouted a mailman, as Mrs. Cobb drove through the post office.

"Stop!" shouted a pilot, as Mrs. Cobb drove through the airport.

"Wait for me!" shouted Mrs. Smith, who was riding her bicycle as fast as she could.

"I must hurry," said Mrs. Cobb. "I must make dinner for Mr. Cobb and the children."

Mrs. Cobb drove and drove. She drove over a fire hydrant and under a truck. Then she drove through a football game and a radio station. She drove on and on.

At last Mrs. Cobb came to her house and went inside.

Soon Mr. Cobb ran into the house.

Mrs. Smith and Mrs. Lee ran into the house.

Then the mailman, the nurse, the pilot and all the other people ran into the house. Last of all, a policeman ran into the house.

"My car!" shouted Mrs. Smith.

"My children!" shouted Mrs. Lee.

"You need glasses!" shouted Mr. Cobb.

"Something must be done," said the policeman.

Mrs. Cobb put the lamp in the umbrella stand. She hung the cat in the closet and put her handbag outdoors. Then she sat in the wastebasket.

"Mrs. Cobb, you must wear glasses," said the policeman.

"Glasses?" shouted Mrs. Cobb. "Who needs glasses?"

"You do!" shouted everyone at once.

"Not I," said Mrs. Cobb, as she hugged the dog and patted her children. "I can see very well."

"You must have glasses," said Mr. Cobb.

"Glasses are beautiful," said the policeman, who was quite handsome in his own glasses.

"Glasses are wonderful," said Mrs. Lee and Mrs. Smith, who were ever so proud of their own glasses.

"Very well," sighed Mrs. Cobb sadly.

The next day, Mr. Cobb and the children took Mrs. Cobb to see a doctor.

"I can see very well," said Mrs. Cobb.

"You are talking to the desk," said the doctor. "I am here, behind you."

"Excuse me," said Mrs. Cobb.

The doctor gave Mrs. Cobb a pair of glasses.

She put them on.

"Who are all these people?" asked Mrs. Cobb, as she looked through the new glasses.

"I am the doctor," said the doctor.

"I am Mr. Cobb," said Mr. Cobb.

"We are your children," said the children.

"Dear me," said Mrs. Cobb. "What a handsome man you are, Mr. Cobb. And such beautiful children we have!"

Then Mrs. Cobb saw a picture of a beautiful lady.

"Who is the lady in the picture?" she asked.

"That's not a picture," said the doctor. "This is a mirror. You are looking at yourself, Mrs. Cobb."

"Dear me," said Mrs. Cobb. "I'm beautiful!"

"Of course you are," said Mr. Cobb.

"I can see as well as anyone," said Mrs. Cobb, and everyone agreed.

And Mrs. Cobb wore her beautiful glasses ever after.

Hallie Parker resides in Friendship, Wisconsin.

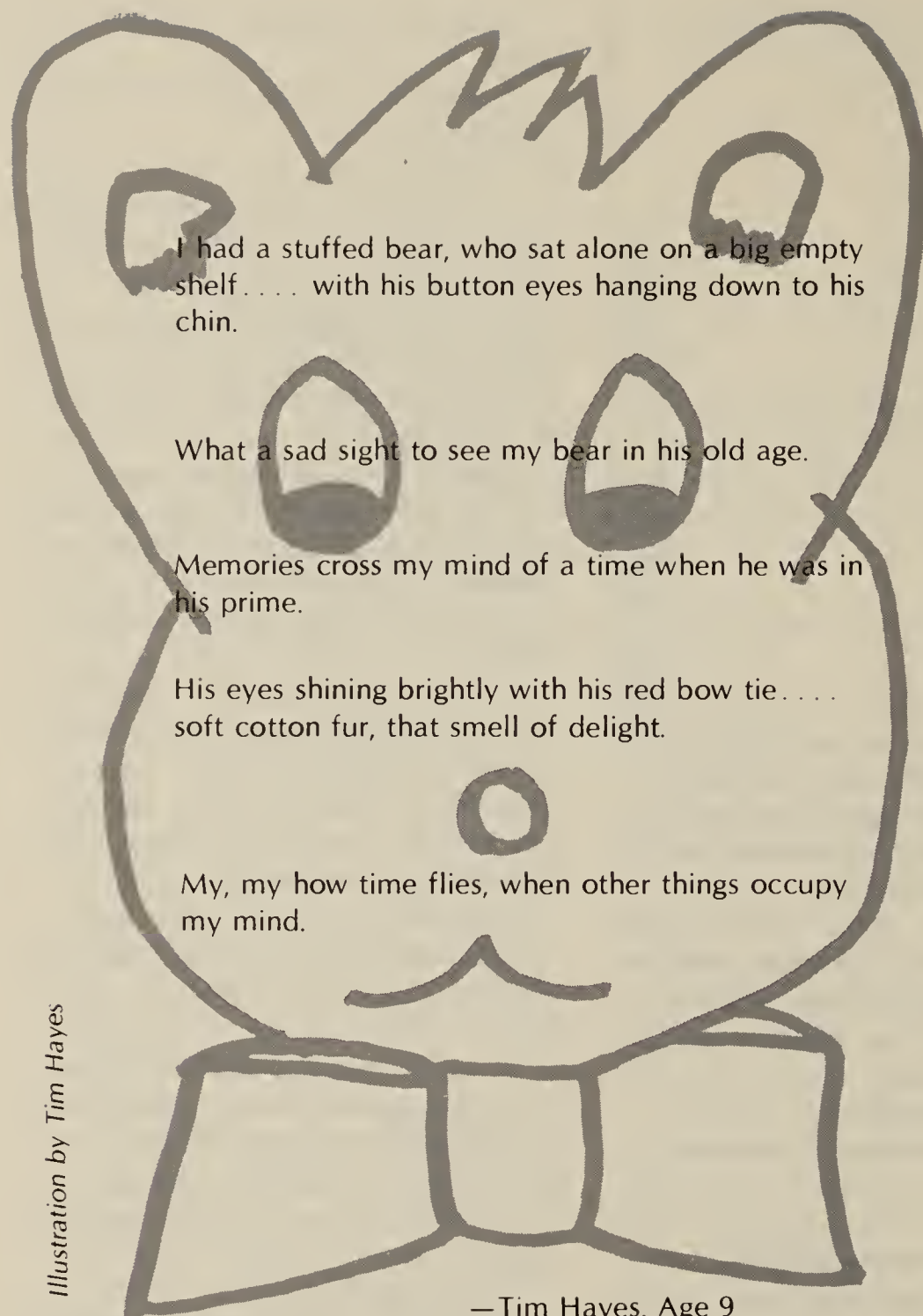


Illustration by Tim Hayes

I had a stuffed bear, who sat alone on a big empty shelf . . . with his button eyes hanging down to his chin.

What a sad sight to see my bear in his old age.

Memories cross my mind of a time when he was in his prime.

His eyes shining brightly with his red bow tie . . . soft cotton fur, that smell of delight.

My, my how time flies, when other things occupy my mind.

—Tim Hayes, Age 9  
Elliott School  
Munster, Indiana

### My Great-Grandma

She is nice and kind.  
I will not have my  
great-grandma  
To stand by me my whole life.  
But when I look in her eyes,  
I say, "Now I know why  
Great-grandmas are called great,  
Because they are great."

—Kyle Juzwicki, Age 10  
Mundell School  
Hobart, Indiana

### Windy tree

Think of muscles  
a tall tree grows  
in its leg,  
in its foot,  
in its wide spread toes  
not to tip over  
and fall on its nose  
when a wild wind hustles  
and tussles  
and blows

—Danielle Baity, Age 7  
Ivanhoe Elementary School  
Gary, Indiana

### Red

Red is a ripe cherry  
Red is a tiny mulberry  
Red is an apple in a tree  
Red is what I get when someone's staring at me.

Red is the color of a rose  
Red is the color of sunburnt toes  
Red is your cheeks on a cold winter day  
Red is the flowers on a lei

Red is the color of strawberry tea  
Red is the freckles on you and me  
Red is the color of a big balloon  
Red is one of the colors on the flag on the moon

Red is the color of the socks on my feet  
Red is a color that I think is neat.

—Bonnie Abercrombie, Age 9  
Elliott School  
Munster, Indiana



### Let's Clean Up!

I'm only seven but I'll soon be eight. It sure would be nice, no, it would be great, if I could see the world that I know all cleaned up and as pretty as new fallen snow.

So let's all be ready to lend a helping hand and make sure our neighborhood is the best in the land.

So bend down and pick up and throw it away for a little care given today will go a long, long way.

—Nicole Crutcher, Age 7  
*Lew Wallace Elementary School  
Hammond, Indiana*

### Good Show

Thunder  
is summer's applause  
for the dance  
of the rain drops.

—Bonnie Kinne  
*Crown Point, Indiana*

### Aardvark

Ants are tasty,  
Ants are fun.  
Boy, do they tickle  
when they run  
up my tongue!

—Paula Mlinar  
*York, Pennsylvania*

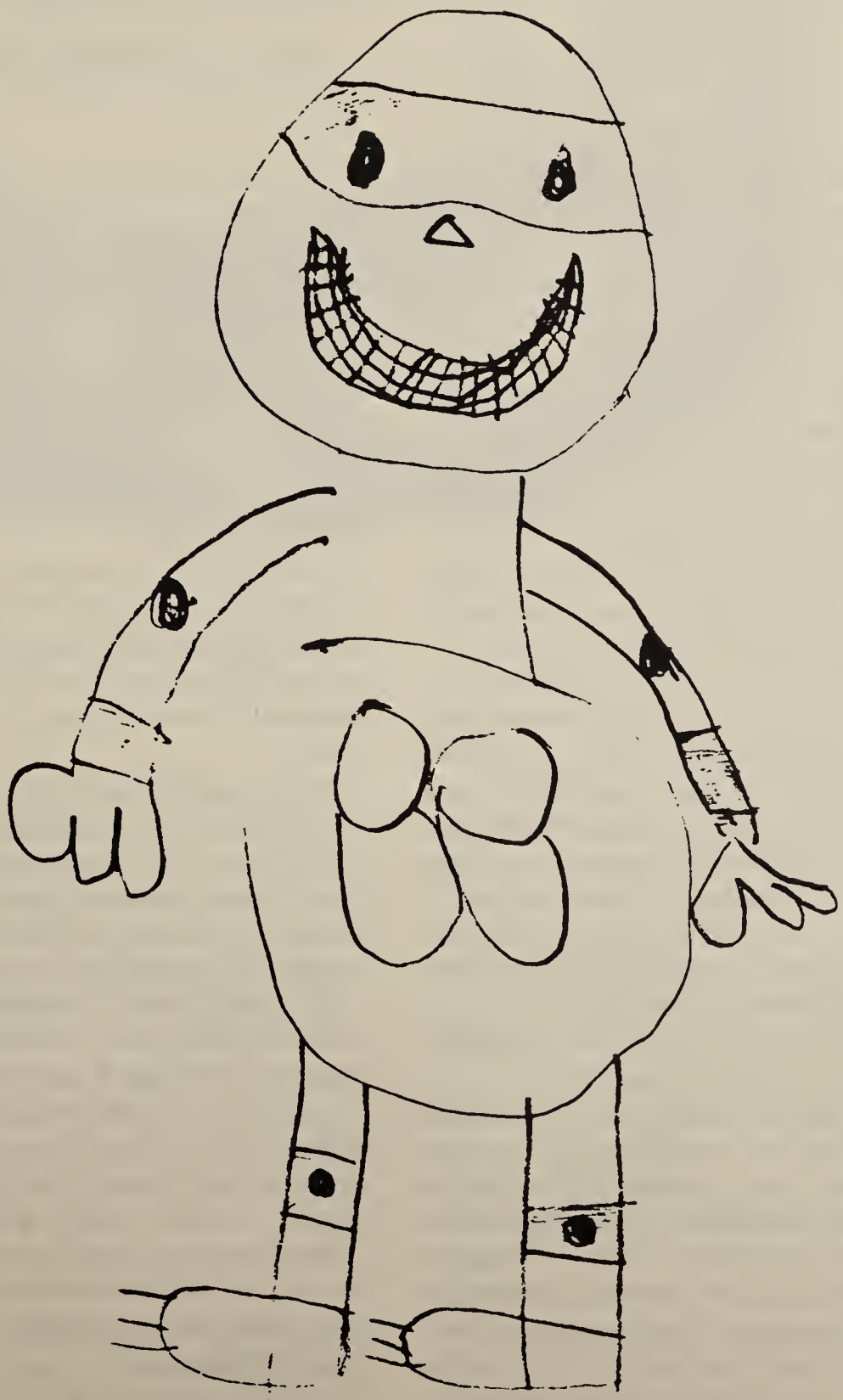
### Across The Ocean

Across the ocean,  
There can be  
Someone who loves you and me.

Across the ocean,  
There can be  
Someone who wants to play.

Across the ocean,  
There can be  
You and me.

—Carrie Taylor, Age 7  
*Mundell School  
Hobart, Indiana*



Michael Tyburski, Age 6  
*Lake Street School, Crown Point, Indiana*

There once was a person from Drake  
who sailed her boat on a lake.  
Her boat blew up,  
But she saved her jeweled cup,  
and from it she ate a cupcake.

—Kate Schoen, Age 8  
*Elliott School  
Munster, Indiana*

### My Sister Mindy

My sister Mindy  
Went to the fair.  
That day it was windy,  
But she didn't care.  
She had fun,  
And ate a hot dog on a bun.

—Danielle Whitaker, Age 9  
*Wadsworth Elementary School  
Griffith, Indiana*

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## THE ADVENTURES OF SIE

One day, Vincent was doing his homework when he heard a faint beeping sound. He looked around, but could not find where the sound was coming from. He glanced at his paper and noticed his last word was misspelled. As he picked up his pencil, the noise grew slightly louder. He put the pencil up to his ear. The eraser was actually beeping, signalling his spelling error.

"Can't be," he thought to himself. "Too bad I didn't have this pencil around during my last spelling test."

Several days later, Vincent was typing a paper for his literature teacher. He unconsciously made a spelling error. He noticed it too late to fix it neatly. He was disgusted at the thought of typing the whole paper over. There was the beep again. He picked up his trusty pencil with the terrific eraser and set it against his mistake. Instantly, the word appeared corrected.

"Great!" he thought to himself. "I wonder what else it will do?"

He walked into his room where the computer was printing his brother's history paper. He noticed his brother hadn't proofread the paper before turning on the printer. Wow, there were a lot of mistakes! Vincent decided to see if his eraser could help. In less than ten seconds, it had corrected the entire paper. Vincent became more excited as

he saw all the things that his eraser could do.

It wasn't until the next day that the strangest thing happened. Vincent was trying to figure out some very difficult math problems, and his sister wouldn't stop bugging him. Out of frustration, he threw his pencil at her. Poof! She was gone.

"Wow!" he thought. "I should have done that sooner."

Vincent had now become very close to and dependent on his eraser. He decided it needed a name. He then began calling the eraser "SIE" (Super Improved Eraser). SIE was a very loyal friend.

Vincent soon discovered another use for SIE. Not only could SIE erase, he could write. SIE wrote the loveliest note to Lisa, Vincent's latest girlfriend. SIE even learned to draw, helping Vincent's art grade tremendously.

SIE had other capabilities that Vincent hadn't even dreamed of. As Vincent tapped on it, out of boredom in science class, the sound of a snare drum could be heard throughout the room. In math class, he just scratched across it, and an electric guitar sound came forth. In chorus, it acted as a microphone as Vincent rested it against his bottom lip. In literature, SIE was very well behaved.

It didn't take long for Vincent's

friends to realize he had a very unique eraser, which they dearly wanted to have. As one boy grabbed for it, Vincent pulled away. SIE sailed into the air and went into the air vent, never to be seen again. (Sniff! Sniff!)

That day, Vincent came home all teary-eyed. When his mom asked him what was wrong, he sadly replied, "SIE's gone."

"Don't worry," his mom said, "he'll probably be back in school tomorrow."

"No, mom. SIE isn't a boy. He was my best eraser. He was all I ever cared about, and he vanished because of jealousy," Vincent answered dramatically.

Sure that he was just over-tired, Vincent's mom told him to go to his room and rest until supper. Vincent slouched off to his room, muttering that no one understood.

While sitting in his room, gazing distractedly, Vincent heard the doorbell ring. After several seconds, his mom called to him in a questioning tone, "Oh, Vincent."

As Vincent went to the door and looked out, he saw the prettiest girl he had ever seen.

"I think I'm going to start caring about something else," he muttered to himself. "I wonder if she can spell."

—Bradley Rohrer, Age 11  
*Kahler Middle School  
Dyer, Indiana*





*Illustration by Louise M. Smith*

## THE MISSING NECKLACE

Once there was a girl named Jennifer Newman—Jenny for short. She was eleven years old, with dark curly hair, and she was almost always dressed nicely. She had a brother named Mark and a sister named Jessica.

Jennifer lived in Detroit, Michigan. Tonight was the night before she was going to Orlando, Florida. She couldn't wait! Jenny put her pearl necklace she had gotten from her Great-Aunt Annie in her dresser drawer in its soft, pink velvet bag.

The next morning, Jenny got up early and put on her nicest outfit. Then she put on her nice white, shiny pearl necklace. She went to the kitchen and ate breakfast with her family.

On the plane to Florida, Jenny saw a

lot of neat things. Little did she know something more exciting was ahead. In the beautiful hotel room, as soon as they were getting ready to go to sleep, she put her necklace in the soft, pink velvet bag in the drawer of her nightstand next to her bed. When she woke up the next morning, she was so excited that she forgot all about the necklace. She just got up, got dressed, ate breakfast, and left! Yes, she had a great time all week. No, she didn't wear the necklace once!

"Jenny!" her mother called, "time to go!"

"Just a minute, Mom!" said Jenny. She had to make sure she hadn't forgotten anything. She thought she was sure, so she left.

Next week, on the day before her Great-Aunt Annie's birthday, Jenny was looking all over for the necklace; it was nowhere to be found!

But the next day, there was a little box in the mail that said, "To: Jennifer Newman." She opened it as fast as she could. Her brother and sister helped. Inside was the pearl necklace! Jenny couldn't believe it. Was it really the necklace? It said, "From: Mrs. Hacker, Cleaning Lady." They celebrated Great-Aunt Annie's birthday with 100 candles!

Jenny promised always to wear her necklace except when she was asleep.

—Allison Gierman, Age 10  
Wadsworth Elementary School  
Griffith, Indiana



## Love

She said we had to write a poem,  
The topic being Love.  
I searched my heart for inspiration;  
I prayed to God above.

A father's love, as I have known,  
Could turn my young heart cold.  
My mother's love has formed my life;  
Shaped me in her mold.

Siblings offer their own brand  
Of hating and of loving.  
We share the hugging, crying, laughing,  
And especially the shoving.

In friendships I have found a love  
That's unlike any other.  
A friend can hear those secret things  
One cannot tell her mother.

Another type of love I learned  
When I discovered THEM.  
From those eyes and those lips  
All my joy and heartaches stem.

The loves I have for everyone  
Are unique to each, you see.  
And in my heart there still remains  
Love enough for me!

—Jenn Setlak, Age 13  
*Kahler Middle School*  
*Dyer, Indiana*

## A Truth About Life

In my short fourteen years  
I've found that life is very dear.  
Courage and love can see you through,  
And soon the old will be replaced by the new.  
Determination, that's what it's all about.  
Determination will work it all out,  
Because love, courage, determination and strife,  
Are very important concepts of life!

—Shannan D. Skelton, Age 14  
*Holy Trinity School*  
*Gary, Indiana*

## The Shyness of a Small Child

A closed book is shy  
it's one who never cries  
and if it does so  
you'll never know  
Because a closed book is shy.

A shy person is a closed book.  
All the beauty is left inside,  
so just take another look.  
Don't let them hide—  
Because a closed book is shy.

Help this book overcome his shyness  
Show him to the world,  
Don't let their story sit untold  
Because an open book is beautiful!

—Bobbie Johnson, Age 14  
*Holy Trinity School*  
*Gary, Indiana*

## My Child

My child  
waits in the dark,  
waiting for the time when  
my family can see when  
its nine-month night of  
darkness becomes day. I'm not  
married and my child has no  
father. My child has no father  
because he was killed by a bullet,  
shot by a gun, by a man who  
pulled the trigger, aimlessly  
and uncaringly left my child  
without a father, for he lays  
in the Ruo Cemetery. My  
child may not have a  
father, but my child  
will have a mother  
willing to do whatever  
it takes to make  
things better  
for my  
child.

—Mary C. Collier, Age 15  
*Blessed Sacrament School*  
*Gary, Indiana*



## THE RESTORATION

by  
Rebecca Phillips

Laura has the newspaper with her. Well, really just the one page with the information she needs. She takes it out from the pocket of the red plaid suitcase she uses every other weekend when she visits her father and his wife, Marsha. The page is folded once and then again, so that not even a corner could peek out from the suitcase. Laura twists a short auburn curl that straggles across her cheek as she thinks about how her mother might react if she knew what Laura is about to do. She suspects that her mother would not even approve of her having glanced through the paper. But Mrs. Henderson, the babysitter, left it on the kitchen table that afternoon three days ago and the temptation joined hands with Laura's boredom and pulled her toward it.

It was one of the ones that always fascinated her. She had tried countless times, while standing in the check-out line at the grocery store, to point out particularly thrilling headlines to her mother, tapping her insistently on the arm, then motioning toward the magazine rack. But her mother's response was almost always a rueful smile and a shake of her head. Now and then she would explain, "I don't want to know 'The Truth About Fergie,' dear, or the answer to 'Will Michael Jackson Marry Liz Taylor?' Do you?"

In fact, Laura was not at all interested in the gossip about celebrities either. But she could not bring herself to admit to her mother that what mesmerized her was the promise of revelations about more lurid mysteries, like the thought of the "Boy Raised by Aliens from Another Planet." Her green eyes grew wide as she tried to envision the details which might explain "Man Awakens at Own Funeral."

Now she regrets that she didn't put her hands on a copy of the paper earlier. Of course she had no way of knowing that a solution to her problem lay within the tabloid's pages. Besides, she didn't usually think of what bothered her as being exactly a problem. Problems were more specific things, like the fact that she had too

many freckles on her nose, or that her bicycle had a flat tire. What weighed on her mind too frequently was simply that she wanted to undo things, reverse time, so that her life was more like it was before her parents' divorce.

But suddenly the words had jumped out, a jack-in-the-box, as she turned the pages of the paper. "Unhappy? Unlucky? Obtain what you most desire! All Problems Solved! Miracle Magic!"

Magic? Such a potential had not occurred to her. She read the whole page carefully. Though there were seven columns of advertisements, Sister Lillie's ad caught her eye immediately. The bold black print announced: "Almighty Astrologer! Restores forgotten love!" and then went on to say, "Call any time. Results within hours." Something told Laura this was the one for her; still she studied the remainder of the listings just to be sure. The Psychic Institute offered the opportunity to "Get revenge! Become rich!" while Dr. Know at the House of Knowledge in New Orleans promised, "I do what others claim! Enemies cursed. I use roots, dolls, love potions, spells."

Laura was impressed that he was so positive about his power, but she wasn't sure about his methods. She knew the dolls meant the stuff about sticking pins in a wax figure that somehow hurt a real person at the same time. She and Mrs. Henderson had seen that in a movie on TV once. It was so scary that they had stopped watching it after the first half hour. Laura pictured Marsha clutching her side as a pin poked into a doll in New Orleans. Maybe it would stick her where the new baby was growing. Laura shuddered. She didn't really want to hurt Marsha; she just wanted her to go away, to disappear, so that her daddy would come back to live with her and her mother. Like Sister Lillie said, "Restore forgotten love." That was what Laura wanted, some magic to remind her father that he loved her mother, not Marsha, and loved her, not this baby-to-be.

If she had known earlier about the possibility of Sister Lillie, then the

magic might have been working, and the baby her father had told her about two weeks ago might not even exist.

He had picked her up as usual on a Friday afternoon. She still did not like that moment when he stood on the doorstep waiting for her to get her bag, as though some invisible boundary kept him from entering the house. Her mother always kissed her goodbye firmly and cheerfully, smiling a smile that included Laura's father as well as her. But Laura thought her mother's smile looked like her own must after she got a vaccination and the doctor said, "Now that didn't hurt, did it?"

Instead of going straight to the apartment on that particular Friday two weeks ago, Laura's dad suggested they stop for a treat, saying something about Marsha working late, supper being delayed, wouldn't this be fun? He seemed nervous, the way both he and Laura's mother had acted right after the divorce, all jumpy whenever they were together. And there he was, leaning against the car outside Baskin Robbins, awkward again.

He moved right from "A 96% on your social studies test? That's great!" to "Marsha's going to have a baby. That is, we're going to have a baby. You know, our baby will be just like a brother or sister for you. Will you like that?" His hand slipped onto Laura's shoulder as he talked.

She studied the ice cream dripping down one side of her cone and onto the edge of the napkin. She licked the run-away chocolate carefully and nodded silently in reply to his question.

When she told her mother the news, it wasn't news at all. "I know, dear. Your dad told me last week on the phone, but he wanted to tell you himself." She hugged Laura, but she smiled her "that-didn't-hurt-did-it" smile at the same time.

Laura's mother was changing, too. Recently there had been three or four evenings when she had gone out on dates. Before the man would arrive to pick her up she would stand in front of the mirror in the front hall, smoothing stray hairs on her forehead and giggling



with Mrs. Henderson as though they were some mother and daughter from one of those old TV shows that came on in the afternoons and was in black and white.

So Laura knows it just might be too late. Things may have changed too much even for someone like Sister Lillie to reverse. Still, it is worth a try. She refolds the newspaper sheet so that Sister Lillie's ad is facing out. She decided to make the call from here since it seemed that it might be important that the words explaining the problem be spoken from the same spot where the magic is needed. In fact, it seems to Laura that it might be critical that she be in this very room when the call is made. She likes this room no better now than she did over six months ago, on the first of her weekend visits to her father and Marsha.

Nothing in the room matches. It is a crazy quilt of color and style that Laura began to hate as soon as she was told it was where she would sleep on her visits here. Marsha explained on that first Friday night, as she transformed the brown tweedy sofa into a bed, tucking in a sheet with one hand and gesturing toward the room's contents with the other. "I call it a den, but it's really just a room where I put everything that doesn't fit anywhere else. Most of the stuff came from my folks' attic. Leftovers." She laughed a little too loudly, making her frizzy blond hair jut out even further from her head. But Marsha was like Laura's mom and dad; she got over being nervous as time passed. Then she was just friendly, even when Laura didn't want her to be.

Laura stares at the "leftovers" now, reluctant to make the call to Sister Lillie. There is an exercise bike, a yellow flowered chair, an end table with a telephone and a cluster of picture frames filled with faces of people Laura has never met. And there is Laura's father's blue leather chair, the one piece of furniture he took with him when he moved out of their house. Laura tries to remember how it looked in its rightful place in their home, not in this mixed-up room. For a while there had seemed to Laura to be a hole in the room where the chair had been, but after a few weeks her mother rearranged the furniture.

The thought of the chair moving back where it belongs helps Laura pick up the phone. If everything goes according to her plan, neither she nor the chair will spend many more nights in this mismatched room.

Sister Lillie's number is one of those long ones, with ten digits, so Laura presses "1" first like she does when her mother lets her dial to call her grandmother in Florida. The first time she dials the number she listens to two rings, then hangs up. Swallowing hard, she picks up the receiver again and pushes the buttons a second time. The phone rings three times before a slow, raspy old-woman voice answers. "Sister Lillie is with a client. You may leave your name and questions and call back later. Do not despair! Sister Lillie will help. Listen for the tone."

There is a moment of silence, then a beep, making Laura jump. She takes a deep breath. "Um. This is Laura Gibson and I, uh, I have a problem with, uh, love. Forgotten love." Her words come in stops and starts, like the time in second grade when she took her turn in front of the class reciting a poem, but forgot a line in the middle. "I'll call back."

Laura's father's footsteps outside the door give her another start. She quickly slips the newspaper under the pillow and grabs her library book from the foot of the bed. Sister Lillie will have to wait until morning.

The light outside the window is still pale when Laura awakens on Saturday. She glances at the clock on the table beside her father's blue chair. Seven forty-five. She wonders what time Sister Lillie wakes up. There are no noises down the hall. Laura's dad and Marsha must still be asleep. She slips out of bed and pulls her jeans and yellow sweater out of her suitcase. On the weekends Laura spends at home, Saturdays are days she and her mother stay in their nightgowns while they eat breakfast—French toast or pancakes that take too long to fix on weekday mornings. But when Laura is visiting her father and Marsha, she gets dressed as soon as she wakes up because she knows Marsha will have on even her earrings and her violet eyeshadow when she walks out of the bedroom.

The sound surprises her, making her

hand freeze on the barrette she is fastening into her hair. Someone is sick. Her father's muffled voice comes along with the sick sounds so it must be Marsha who is throwing up. "Results within hours." Could Sister Lillie have understood Laura's problem just from the message she left? Laura feels queasy, too. She turns quickly as the door opens, the barrette slipping from her fingers onto the floor.

"Hi, sweetie, did I startle you? I'm sorry. Hey, we've got a big day planned today. That is, if we can get Marsha on her feet."

Laura stares at the carpet, poking the fallen barrette with her toe. "Is she sick?"

"Sick? Oh, no. Well, yes." Her father's laughter makes no more sense to her than his answer. "She's got morning sickness. Sometimes when women are pregnant they get nauseated, you know, sick, in the mornings, but it doesn't last long and it isn't like having the flu or anything. I remember when your mother was pregnant with you. . . well. Come on, let's go see what we can rustle up in the kitchen."

Laura follows him, breathing a sigh of relief. Sister Lillie's magic must not be at work yet. She must be waiting for Laura to call her back.

Laura and her dad are seated on the tall white stools at the kitchen counter when Marsha comes in, still in her robe, her hair hanging straight, no makeup. She looks better this way, Laura thinks. She returns Laura's father's smile, but shakes her head firmly at his offer of coffee. Instead she rummages around in the cabinet for crackers and pours herself a glass of Seven-up.

"Feeling better?" he asks.

She nods. "Um. I'm o.k. now. Oh, I forgot to show you this last night," she says, reaching for her purse at the end of the counter. She pulls out a swatch of bright aqua cotton. "I thought we'd use this in the baby's room, along with mostly white. I saw a white Jenny Lind crib at Schriver's yesterday that was perfect. We can wait on accent colors. Use a nice pink if it's a girl." She smiles at Laura, who makes the corners of her mouth turn up politely.

As Marsha talks, Laura pictures the room where she sleeps when she visits here. In her mind she removes the yellow chair, the desk, the couch where



she lay sleeping an hour earlier, even her father's blue chair, and replaces that jumble with swirls of white and aqua and pink.

"Sounds fine to me. I haven't even gotten around to telling Laura about the house." He turns toward Laura and puts his hand on her shoulder, making her stiffen slightly. Another big change must be about to be announced. "Marsha and I have bought a house, sweetie. It's not far from here. It still needs some work inside. We'll be spending some weekends over there with paintbrushes, but we won't move in 'til right before the baby comes, so there's plenty of time. That's the big plan for today. To take you over to see the house." He turns his head toward Marsha then. "And you know what just occurred to me this morning as I was waking up? That third bedroom, upstairs? It shouldn't be a study. What would we do with one? It should be Laura's room and nothing else. What do you think?"

Laura would like to feign disinterest, but she cannot help looking straight at Marsha.

"Isn't that funny! I was thinking the same thing. I don't know why we didn't think of it immediately. And that means I can finally have an excuse to get rid of my parents' castaways!" She laughs and takes another sip of her soft drink. "I think you'll like the room, Laura. It's not real big, but it does have a wonderful little dormer where we could build a window seat where you could sit and read. I've noticed what a reader you are. When I wrote my folks last week I asked them to mail a box of books to me, ones that I read when I was about your age."

Laura unintentionally gives Marsha the biggest smile of their year-long acquaintance. She thinks how she really sort of likes the way she looks without her hair all frizzed and without her makeup.

"Would you like to go this afternoon, after we take you by the house, and look for material for curtains and a cushion for the window seat?"

"Yeah. That sounds neat."

As she thinks, Laura tries to direct four or five surviving Cheerios around in the milk left in the bottom of her bowl. There will be a bedroom just for

her. She devotes another minute to trying to position the floating circles with her spoon, one here, three there, two here, two there, but she can't keep them in a pattern.

"Did you see anything you liked for our room?" her dad is asking Marsha as Laura slides off the stool and hurries down the hallway. She closes the door behind her and looks over her shoulder twice before retrieving the newspaper from beneath her pillow. She dials quickly and is greeted with the scratchy voice, but this time it is not a recording. "Hello. This is Sister Lillie. How may I help you?"

Laura shivers for an instant, then makes herself speak. "This is Laura Gibson again. The one with the problem with forgotten love."

"Yes, Laura. I got your message."

"My problem is...well, I think maybe I don't need magic right now. Maybe things will be o.k. anyway. So that's all, but thanks."

Laura puts the receiver down so rapidly that she barely hears Sister Lillie's reply. "You're welcome, honey, you're welcome."

*Rebecca Phillips resides in Knoxville, Tennessee.*



*Illustration by Jennifer Eilts, Age 14  
St. Mary's School, Crown Point, Indiana*

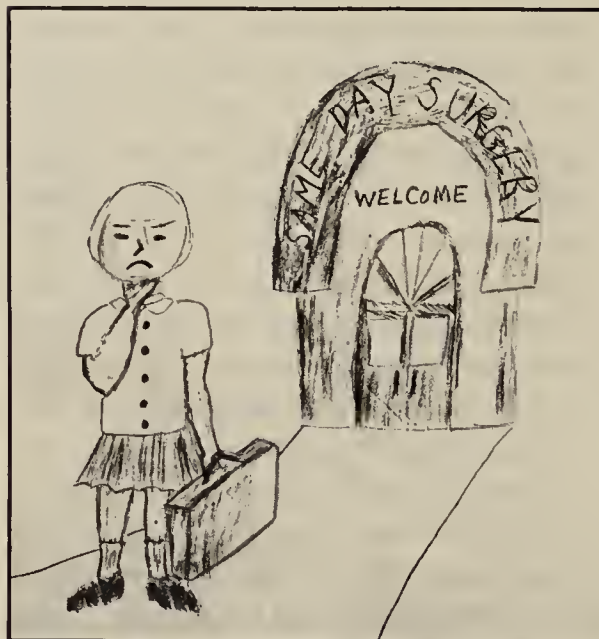
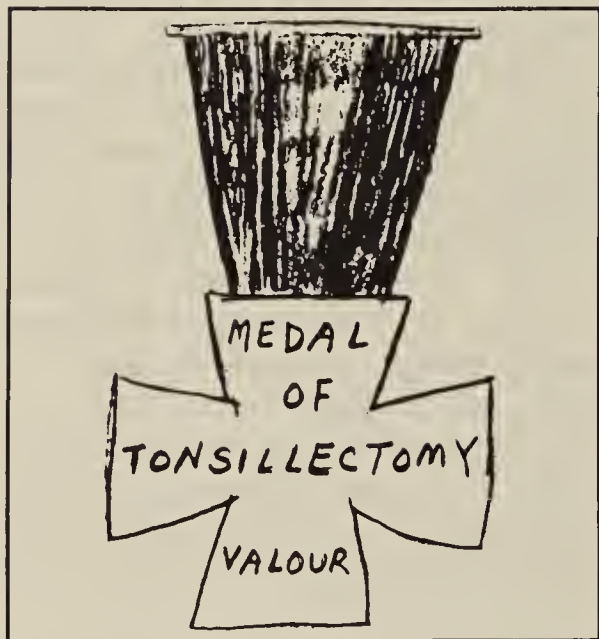


## THE DAY MY TONSILS CAME OUT

*I dedicate this story to family and friends who helped me to be courageous through my operation.*

I once went to get my tonsils out. I had to get my tonsils out because they weren't shrinking like they were supposed to.

I didn't think it was too bad. They gave me a shot for nervousness. I didn't even cry! I sat for a while, then the nurse came to get me.



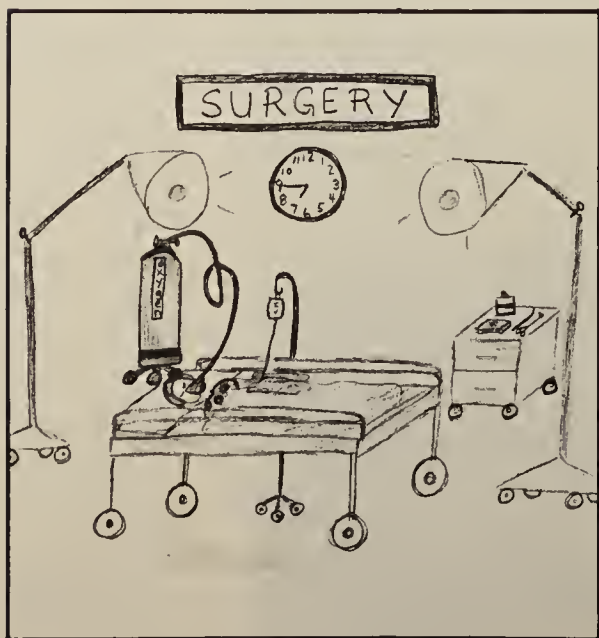
I was put to sleep by gas. I didn't want to be put to sleep by a shot. When they do put you to sleep it's weird. The operation took about one hour.

It's hard to wake up after the operation. When I did wake up, I cried a little (I just cried softly).

To help my throat feel better, I had to breathe in a mist that was shooting out a tube. When they did this, I got confused and almost pulled out my I.V.!

When they were done, my throat was sore! I couldn't go outside for two whole weeks!

It was not as bad as I thought. I was very happy it was over. I was glad to go outside. It is much better because now I hardly get sore throats.



*Illustrations by Maridonna Helweg and Janet Beda*

—Sarah Beda, Age 8  
Our Lady of Grace School  
Highland, Indiana



## Imagination

I imagine my life,  
I imagine it my way,  
But, do you mind  
If I go the wrong way?

—Magaly Mercado, Age 12  
*P.S. 16K*  
*Brooklyn, New York*

## A Joyful Sound

a feeling of love inside me  
it's like a dream of wonder  
it's a magic touch of super power  
a joyful sound I hear in my heart  
it's a miracle of life inside me  
with a feeling of glory  
the eyes of love that I see in me

—Ralph Roman, Age 12  
*P.S. 16K*  
*Brooklyn, New York*

## When You Whisper

When you whisper, the words  
vibrate and move through the  
air with the feeling of love.  
The words keep on floating in  
space, going through my mind,  
hurrying inside me, and I can't  
get them out.

—Juan Rodriguez, Age 12  
*P.S. 16K*  
*Brooklyn, New York*

## Round And Round

Don't let anyone tell you  
What to do.  
Stay at your own pace.  
Do what you want to do.

Go round and round  
That's okay.  
Don't feel pressured.  
Do it your way.

The merry-go-round of love  
Is a serious thing.  
Don't take it lightly.  
Do the right thing.

To be a race car  
Is not important  
For some it's okay.  
But, don't be pressured.  
Do it your way!

—Ronnetta McMillan, Age 13  
*Holy Trinity School*  
*Gary, Indiana*

## Tears never hide

A  
Tear  
tends to  
tread down  
a dreary face.  
Drip, drop, drip all  
over the place. Never  
wanting to show the  
feelings that you hide;  
Tears won't let you  
leave them bottled  
up inside. Tears  
tend to tread.

—Trachell Taylor, Age 13  
*Holy Trinity School*  
*Gary, Indiana*

## Peaceful World

I wish that the world was fun and peaceful,  
Not dangerous, crazy, and fearful.  
A world where no one has to lock their door,  
No arguing, no fighting, and no war.  
I wish that the world was a wonderful place to be,  
Where everyone could be secure and throw away their key.  
Why couldn't the world be a place with no guns and knives,  
Where people could have long and happy lives?  
Why couldn't the world be full of love and joy,  
With the same amount for each girl and boy,  
Where no one would be abused and victimized.  
I guess it's asking for too much,  
But no one said that you couldn't fantasize.

—Francisco Rosado, Age 11  
*P.S. 16K*  
*Brooklyn, New York*

## STRANGE RESIDENTS

by  
Patricia Wilson



*Illustration by Max Buczynski, Age 9  
Riley School, Hammond, Indiana*

A man wearing a gray overcoat approached the imposing Victorian house. He stood on the front porch waiting for an answer to his knock. He wrapped his arms around his body and stamped his feet to ward off the cold, biting wind. Inside the house, a grandfather's clock struck the hour of twelve. The man gave one more sharp rap on the door with its peeling paint. Deciding that no answer would be forthcoming even though he thought he heard voices from within, he turned and left.

Inside the house a conversation was taking place.

"Henry, I'm really getting disgusted with your sloppy ways," Myrtle said as she worked her way through a trail of crumbs with a broom and dustpan.

"Myrt, Myrt, Myrt, why do you have to be so darn fussy?" Henry faced her and tried to tweak her chin.

"None of that now, Henry. How many times do I have to tell you that I don't like it when you shorten my name," she said as she continued cleaning.

"Okay, okay, Myrt, I mean Myrtle. You know I just love to see the steam coming out of your ears when you get mad." He gave her a pat on the shoulder as he made his way across the room to his favorite easy chair.

"Yes, I know I'm sensitive, but I worry that you don't take things more seriously." She put the broom and dustpan back in the closet. "I have the

feeling that things are just not right in the main house."

"Why are you so jumpy?" Henry asked. "We have a warm place to stay, lots of food, and no cats."

"I know I'm being silly, but I just have this feeling things are about to change." She and Henry set the table for their dinner.

"Well, give me a hug. I'm going to the kitchen now. Mrs. Johnson just had a delivery from Mr. Simmons' deli. I'll see if she bought some of that Swiss cheese you like so well."

After Henry departed, Myrtle sat in the brown wooden rocker and worked on the scarf she was making for him for Christmas. She didn't mean to worry or nag Henry. It was just that she had such a feeling of dread.

Full of confidence, Henry openly made his way to the kitchen, not following his usual rules of caution.

In front of the living room fireplace a brown and white bundle of fur rested in an almost invisible ball. Something new had indeed been added to the household.

Henry hummed a rock tune as he scurried across the hall, awaking the newest resident that December day. "Wow, what a haul," Henry exclaimed as he examined the feast before his eyes. He was just getting ready to take a huge piece of Swiss cheese back to his hole when he had the instinctive feeling he was being watched. There's

nothing to worry about, he told himself, as he hopped down from the laden table. With a nonchalant shrug of his shoulders he continued on his way.

By now the cat had spotted his prey and waited patiently for the tender morsel to come within his range. Henry turned as a shadow crossed his path. What he saw made him drop his loot and run as fast as he could across the waxed hall floor. Skidding on the throw rug, he barely made it home.

Gasping for breath, he cried, "Myrt...Myrtl...Myrtle, I'll never doubt you again! Mrs. Johnson has a cat, a big brown and white one."

"Oh! Henry, that must have been the reason for the man from the pet shop coming to the door a while ago. I thought Mrs. Johnson had finally ordered the fish tank for her son Jerry for Christmas. Now we know the real reason for his being here. He must have delivered the cat earlier in the day." She twisted her hands together while pacing the floor.

"Don't worry, darling, I will just have to be more careful when I go out for food from now on. No cat's going to get the best of Henry Mouse," he said, assuring his wife with more bravado than he really felt.

Meanwhile, the cat had found the warmth of the fire more to his liking than staring at a hole in the wall. As he settled his feline body into a snug ball, he meowed, "My time will come!"

*Patricia Wilson resides in Hammond, Indiana.*





A willow in the wind  
Swishes and sloshes  
Silently wishing

—Cesar Torres, Age 12



The blue flower  
has a bee inside—  
smells like a cherry pie

—Giselle Gomez, Age 9



In love  
a little flower opens  
and falls apart

—Scarlet Caba, Age 11

Grass sways through the wind  
Softly sunlight shines on you  
Taste me says the day

—Jennifer Dawson, Age 8



Tulips stand still  
As they stare at the blue sky  
Looking for the clouds

—Marilyn Navarro, Age 8



Small pink flower  
looking for a friend  
in the yellow sun

—Diana Santiago, Age 7

Flowers share colors  
With all the other beauties  
Everyone holds hands

—Sully Martinez, Age 8

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360 guests helped mark the occasion. An elegant luncheon buffet was served with entertainment by the 7-piece "Wayne Michaels Orchestra". An oil-can sculpted cake was served for dessert, and a huge "10" ice sculpture helped light up the ballroom.

Art Lukowski, Sr. and his wife Connie were presented with a plaque commemorating the founding of Oil Express in 1980. Though a bit choked with emotion, Art gave an inspiring speech about how he started Oil Express and how he, as a Polish Immigrant, is happy to be able to live the "American dream".

A good time was had by all. Oil Express thanks all of our guests for attending and helping make our celebration a huge success.



Dan Barnas, Vice President and Co-Owner of Oil Express National, Inc. presents Art Sr. and Connie Lukowski with a plaque celebrating ten years of Oil Express.



A huge "10" ice sculpture helped light up the ballroom.



"An oil-can sculpted cake was served for dessert".



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